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Mediation in Northern Ireland: Mitchell's Success or the Luck of the Irish?

by

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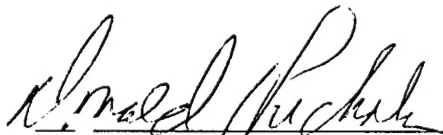
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Introduction

On Good Friday, 10 April 1998 eight of the ten largest political parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish governments concluded twenty two months of grueling negotiations and signed The Good Friday Agreement. This treaty put in place an historic opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland to turn away from the sectarian violence that had plagued, traumatized and terrorized them for the past 30 years of the “troubles”. It offered them hope that in the future they would be able to use politics instead of guns and bombs to settle their differences. Many outstanding men and women participated in the negotiations and demonstrated great personal and political courage in an environment charged with powerful emotions. The leaders of the largest Protestant and Catholic political parties, David Trimble and John Hume, even received the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to bring peace to their homeland. In the eye of the storm of these intense negotiations stood an outsider: former United States Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. Invited by the British and Irish governments, Mitchell served as the chairman of the negotiations. In this master’s thesis I will focus my research on Senator Mitchell’s role in order to assess the extent to which his personal performance as chairman of the negotiations led to its successful conclusion: the Good Friday Agreement. Specifically, I will answer the question: to what extent do the international actions of private mediation by former United States

Senator George Mitchell bear responsibility for the fruits of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the general peace process in Northern Ireland?

Northern Ireland is not the only place in our world that is experiencing a long-term, seemingly intransigent conflict. The international community would greatly benefit from knowing the value of private mediation in contentious and intransigent environments. The study of mediation is almost as old as the practice itself. Scholars and practitioners are constantly searching for the key to resolving conflict peacefully. The world would undoubtedly benefit from the knowledge of whether or not others can accomplish what occurred in Northern Ireland. Today, Northern Ireland is once again deadlocked in negotiations over weapons decommissioning. After departing for over a year, the British and Irish governments have once again invited Mitchell back to help them work through an impasse. Cyprus, Bosnia, Timor, Angola, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Somalia, India, Pakistan and many others would surely benefit from the knowledge of whether the Good Friday Agreement was merely the luck of the Irish, that is, the result of fortuitous or conducive environmental circumstances, or if mediation itself was uniquely the key.

To answer my question I must first find out if I can dismiss the alternative hypothesis that something else was the most significant factor. Because my question is a "to what extent" question I understand that many factors had significant influence on the agreement. My goal is to find out how significant Mitchell's participation was and if it was the most important factor. The potential "something else's" that I can identify all fall under a change in the climate of relations between the two sides: changes in identity, national goals, inter-communal relations, economic conditions and

perceptions of “other”. I will demonstrate through primarily, but not exclusively, the analysis of survey and polling data that there were not any detectable significant changes in the political climate to indicate that the time was ripe for an agreement regardless of Mitchell’s participation. I will use Karl Deutsch’s integration theory to build a framework with which to analyze Northern Ireland’s current level of integration and will demonstrate that there is little evidence of a “security community” in Northern Ireland today. Deutsch’s theory is built upon the principle that parties living in a security community have set aside violence as a viable option for conflict resolution.

In my research I have applied current conflict resolution and mediation theory to Mitchell’s role and actions. I will utilize mediation theory as a framework to analyze and assess Mitchell’s performance. In addition to analyzing Mitchell’s actions and decisions, I will focus on comments and reactions made by the primary participants in the negotiations to give insight into the strength of Mitchell’s contribution. I will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on media accounts and editorial commentaries made on participants in the negotiations that address Mitchell’s contribution to the peace process. Mitchell’s contribution is my independent variable while the success of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 is my dependent variable. For my sources I have used respected, top quality newspapers from Northern Ireland, Great Britain, The Republic of Ireland and the United States.

Northern Ireland has been a land of “troubles” for many years. Ireland’s most recent rebellion against Great Britain occurred in 1916 and resulted in independence for the Republic of Ireland, minus the six counties in Ulster or Northern

Ireland, in 1922. Northern Ireland's Protestant majority demanded to remain linked to Great Britain, in spite of the demands of the Catholics across the island to keep Ireland intact. Over the past 83 years and particularly during the past 30-35 years, sectarian violence in Northern Ireland has been prevalent.

Terrorists from both the Catholic and Protestant sides have waged a bloody war of revenge and tit-for-tat bombings and killings against each other and against innocent people as well. In the past, large segments of the general public supported the activists as counterweights to the other side's terrorism. As the minority group in Northern Ireland, Catholics have long suffered social, cultural and economic discrimination. Many Catholics supported the activities of groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) as one of the means through which they could seek redress. Protestants meanwhile have been the majority in Northern Ireland, but a minority on the island. With a siege mentality, they have traditionally been concerned about losing their way of life if the Catholics are allowed to achieve their goal of unifying the Republic. While living together in the same region, Catholics and Protestants have very diverse senses of identity. Catholics look south to Ireland for their source of religious and cultural heritage, while Protestants look to England for theirs. These factors color the attitudes and positions of the political leaders of both sides. Mistrust runs deep and the scars of past wrongs are continuously dredged up. Many of the Loyalist Protestant leaders refuse to even speak directly to some of the Nationalist Catholic leaders.

In the late 1990s, mainstream leaders on both sides intensified their efforts to stop the violence and devise a peaceful solution to their situation. The Good Friday

Agreement, signed in 1998, was the fruit of their labors. George Mitchell observed from his time working in Northern Ireland that:

What [the leaders interested in peace had going for them] was a desperate longing for peace and normality that existed across Northern Ireland, among both unionists and nationalists. Twenty-five years of brutal sectarian war had scarred the hearts of everyone. It wasn't so much the numbers killed (3200) and wounded (36000). It was the fear, the anxiety, which gnawed away at every soul. The highly publicized and emotional funeral had become a regular event in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of people had had enough of that. They were sick of it. They wanted change.¹

Ultimately the agreement calls for "devolution" of control over Northern Ireland from Great Britain to an executive council comprised of both Protestants and Catholics and "decommissioning" of weapons by both the paramilitary organizations on the Protestant side and the IRA on the Catholic side. Additionally, new "north-south" agencies are to be established that will encourage the interaction between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as "east-west" agencies to encourage positive interaction between Ireland and Britain.

It is difficult to pin down exactly when the peace process began, because numerous events were like stepping stones that allowed everyone to move forward. One of the first events occurred in early 1984 when the moderate Catholic parties of Northern Ireland and the Irish government developed a proposal that, in effect, stated that Irish unity would come only "with the consent of the people of the North and South of Ireland."² In 1985 the Irish and British governments signed the Anglo-Irish agreement that included the provision that there would be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. These

two agreements signaled a new degree of flexibility by both sides and were significant shifts from the previously entrenched positions. Both governments had previously claimed absolute sovereignty over Northern Ireland. Feeling somewhat left out of the developments and concerned about their stake in the negotiations, the Protestant leaders approached the British leadership in 1987 to discuss possible negotiations. The subsequent negotiations in 1991 and 1992 ended without any agreement. The British and Irish leadership believed that these negotiations failed, in part, because they excluded the political parties associated with paramilitary organizations; as a result, the negotiations were not accompanied by a cessation of violence.³

On December 15, 1993, Prime Minister John Major and Taoiseach Albert Reynolds signed the Downing Street Declaration. In addition to affirming their support for self determination in Northern Ireland, the governments agreed that political parties that “establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown they abide by the democratic process are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue in due course between the governments and the political parties on the way ahead.”⁴ This agreement opened the door for all parties to negotiate and gave groups like the IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries an incentive to stop the violence. In August 1994 the IRA declared a complete cessation of all military activity. On October 6, 1994, the Combined Loyalist Military Command, the umbrella group for the Protestant paramilitary groups, also declared a cease-fire.

When Mitchell arrived in Northern Ireland in February 1995, he noted that “hopes were high. But it was a hope tinged with fear and fatalism. Northern Ireland

had been through earlier peace efforts, in 1974 and again in 1991-92, and each time there had been the failure, the letdown, the continuation of sectarian conflict.”⁵ In the early 1990s, President Clinton placed the Northern Ireland peace process high on his priority list of foreign policy efforts. George Mitchell retired from the Senate on 2 January 1995 and within seven days was sworn in as the special advisor to the president and secretary of state on economic initiatives in Northern Ireland. Mitchell initially got involved with Northern Ireland as the leader of a conference on trade and investment. Most Northern Irish leaders and President Clinton as well note the strong connection between the existence of jobs and peace. The fact that Clinton enlisted the help of one of America’s most powerful leaders demonstrates the importance he placed on encouraging peace in Northern Ireland.

Mitchell’s role as head of the trade conference was brief, but it introduced him to the politics and personalities of Northern Ireland. Later in the year, at the invitation of the Irish and British governments, Mitchell became chairman of the International Body on Decommissioning that would study and make recommendations on disarmament in Northern Ireland. Joining him on the body were former Chief of the Canadian Defense Forces, John de Chastelain, and former Prime Minister of Finland, Harri Holkeri. Like all political issues in Northern Ireland, disarmament is a thorny and volatile subject. Mitchell and his team were asked to conduct a review and provide a non-binding recommendation on how to resolve the decommissioning issue. Although everyone was well aware that the final report would not be binding, all of the players involved knew that the contents could seriously help or hinder the political positions of the opposing factions.

For years, the British government, led by John Major and the Protestant political parties of Northern Ireland, had insisted that the IRA disarm before Sinn Fein entered into any political negotiations. The Catholic, nationalist political party Sinn Fein has always claimed that it does not control the IRA, a claim dismissed as preposterous by Protestant leaders. The sticking point was that without Sinn Fein involved in the negotiations, there would be no peace. Although the IRA leaders had called a cease-fire, they refused to disarm prior to negotiations. John Major's position was strongly influenced by the strength of his party and administration. In 1995 his party was in disarray and weak. He didn't have the political capital to make concessions to the nationalists (Catholics) and thereby anger the loyalists (Protestants).

In this environment of political constraints and maneuvering, Mitchell gained valuable experience and knowledge about the workings of Northern Irish politics. After analyzing the situation, he and his team decided to suggest a process of parallel decommissioning, in which all parties, including Sinn Fein, would be allowed to negotiate and at the same time a process of disarmament would commence. Mitchell had spoken with Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Hugh Annesley to better understand if Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, could actually persuade the IRA to decommission prior to negotiations. Annesley replied "No, he couldn't do it even if he wanted to. He doesn't have that much control over them."⁶ As the police force of Northern Ireland, the RUC is a government agency, overwhelmingly Protestant and directly responsible to the political leadership. These remarks directly contradicted the position of the Major government and caused quite an uproar.

Mitchell, for his part, clearly understood the sensitivity of the situation and the positions of the various leaders. Since he was there at the invitation of the governments, he did not wish to embarrass John Major, but at the same time he had to retain his independence, lest others dismiss him as a pawn of the British government. There was a feeling, widespread among the political parties in Northern Ireland, that the chairman of the last negotiation, Sir Ninian Stephen, the former governor-general of Australia, had been too close to the British government.⁷ In the end, Mitchell and the International Body adjusted and softened the wording in the report, although Major's desire for prior decommissioning was rejected. Mitchell and the International Body recommended that the parties affirm their total and absolute commitment to what would later be called the "Mitchell Principles":

- (a) democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;
 - (b) total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations;
 - (c) such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;
 - (d) renunciation for themselves, and opposition to any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;
 - (e) agreement to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree;
- and

(f) urge that “punishment” killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.⁸

Mitchell put the recommendation for parallel decommissioning in another part of the document as a suggested consideration.

Mitchell made a solid impression on many of the political leaders in Northern Ireland during his tenure as chairman of the International Body on Decommissioning. So much so, that the British and Irish governments invited him, de Chastelain and Holkeri to return and mediate the subsequent negotiations. They accepted and began the historic path that culminated in the Good Friday Agreement.

Notes

Introduction

¹ George Mitchell, *Making Peace*, (Alfred Knopf, 1999), p.174.

² Mitchell, p 15.

³ Mitchell, p 19.

⁴ Mitchell, p 19.

⁵ Mitchell, p 21.

⁶ Mitchell, p. 30.

⁷ Mitchell, p47.

⁸ Mitchell, p35-36.

Chapter 1

In Search of Integration

One of the most significant aspects of the Good Friday Agreement is the provision that gives the people of Northern Ireland the right to democratically choose whether to remain a part of Great Britain or to reunify with the Republic of Ireland. Another important component of the treaty is that it provides for a council of ministers and an assembly, both with Catholic and Protestant leaders, to whom Britain will devolve the power to govern the state. Additionally, the agreement required the leadership of the Republic of Ireland to amend their constitution by removing claims of sovereignty over Northern Ireland. In exchange, the Republic of Ireland received some say in activities in Northern Ireland through bilateral, cross-boundary councils between themselves and Northern Ireland and Britain. The last notable aspect of the agreement was that all parties agreed to decommission their weapons and to settle their disagreements peacefully. This was a step forward toward peace that most Northern Irish never expected to see during their lives. Had a security community finally come into being after some 30 years of "troubles" in Northern Ireland to prompt these events?

For me to determine the influence Senator George Mitchell had as chairman of the negotiations, I need to understand the impact that other factors may have had on the peace process. One powerful factor that could have driven the leaders of Northern

Ireland to set aside their differences and sign this treaty would have been a significant change in the degree of integration between the Loyalists and Nationalists. If the social and political climate of Northern Ireland had indeed changed for the better, then Mitchell's job would have been fairly simple and perhaps almost anyone could have been a successful chairman. If that was not the case and neither a security community nor integration were present, then I will need to focus on the negotiations and negotiators themselves to better understand the extent of Mitchell's influence on Northern Ireland's peace process.

As the minority group in Northern Ireland, Catholics have long suffered social, cultural and economic discrimination. As a result, many Catholics turned to groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA or Provos) as one of the only means through which they could seek redress. Historically, Catholics placed little faith in the police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), that is overwhelmingly Protestant and has a reputation for colluding with Protestant paramilitary terrorists.

Protestants meanwhile have been the majority in Northern Ireland, but a minority on the island. With a siege mentality, they have traditionally been concerned about losing their way of life if the Catholics are allowed to achieve their goal of unifying the Republic. In addition to wanting to maintain political dominance, the Protestants have wanted to maintain their economic status. Since settling in Northern Ireland from Scotland and England, the wealthier Protestants have built up businesses and industry, while the native Irish focused predominantly on agriculture. Protestants have had a love-hate relationship with the English for years. As a group, they consider themselves British, but are forever leery that English politicians will sell them out.

The British have at times felt trapped in Northern Ireland. On the one hand they have wanted to support the Protestants, and they sympathize with their desires to remain in the union. On the other hand, they have had to step in repeatedly to stop the inter-communal violence and oppression. This has resulted in British soldiers becoming targets of violence from both sides, but predominantly from the Catholics.

On the other side of the border, the Irish have sympathized with their Irish-Catholic brethren. Although the leaders of the Republic of Ireland have not endorsed or supported terrorism for many years, up until the recent Good Friday Agreement, Ireland had two articles in its constitution claiming sovereignty over the six counties. This dispute has been the significant sticking point in the relationship between Ireland and Britain, as well as between Ireland and the predominantly Protestant leadership of Northern Ireland.

While living together in the same region, Catholics and Protestants have very diverse senses of identity. Catholics look south to Ireland for their source of religious and cultural heritage, while Protestants look to England for theirs. Historically the Catholic position has been a demand for the withdrawal of all British forces and a reunification of the island. The Protestant position has been a demand that Northern Ireland remains part of Britain.

In the mid 1990s, mainstream leaders on both sides intensified their efforts to stop the violence and devise a peaceful solution to their situation. The Good Friday Agreement was a result of these efforts. Ultimately the agreement calls for “devolution” of control of Northern Ireland from Great Britain to an executive council comprised of both Protestants and Catholics and “decommissioning” of weapons by

both the paramilitary organizations on the Protestant side and the IRA on the Catholic side. Something positive happened in Northern Ireland. With their bitter past as a backdrop, the two sides came together and forged an agreement. Using Karl Deutsch's theory of integration, I have analyzed the situation in Northern Ireland to find out if there were signs of integration or the emergence of a security community, or if they merely pushed on to further amalgamation without those conditions.

Karl W. Deutsch, et al wrote about integration in *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* in 1957. In this book he develops a framework of conditions, based upon successful and failed case studies, in which integration is encouraged or discouraged. I will use Deutsch's theory of integration and apply it to the situation in Northern Ireland. I am looking to see if the current attempt to form a coalition government of Protestants and Catholics from various political parties was preceded, and perhaps facilitated by integration, that is, a change in social relations between two communities. Although I cannot predict the likelihood of future success of the Northern Ireland peace process, I can analyze the situation and determine whether or not it meets the criteria and conditions that Deutsch argues are necessary and/or sufficient for integration. If Northern Ireland does not meet these conditions, it may signify that the parties involved have a much tougher road to travel to reach the peaceful end of a security community.

To begin with, we need to be on a common level with the definitions that Deutsch used to describe what is happening when peoples come together. Deutsch writes that what he is dealing with are political communities, which are social groups with a process of political communication, some machinery for enforcement and some

popular habits of compliance. It is those political communities that are able to eliminate war and the expectation of war within their boundaries that Deutsch addresses. Deutsch describes integration as the attainment, within a territory, of a "sense of community" and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a "long" time, dependable expectations of "peaceful change" among its population.¹ In the case of Northern Ireland, we have a defined territory, which can be described in various ways: the six counties, Ulster, or Northern Ireland. A fundamental question is whether or not there is a sense of community among the people who live in the six counties. What the signatories of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 were trying to do was further develop the institutions and practices of peaceful change.

Deutsch defines a sense of community as the belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least this one point-- common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of peaceful change.² It is difficult to wrap your hands around a concept such as this. One could argue that the majority of the people advocate peaceful change and it is only the extremists in the Irish Republican Army and the Protestant paramilitary groups who advocate violent means. Sense of community must be addressed as a matter of degrees in which a general population perceives its situation. When you have two nation-states you can more readily see whether or not peace is at hand; the armies of the two countries do not fight, nor do the two countries mobilize and threaten each other. Within a community it might be more difficult to visualize sense of community, when extremists periodically interrupt the peace process with terrorist acts. The two key aspects are

whether or not a clear majority of the people support or abhor such acts and whether or not they have expectations for peaceful change.

Deutsch defines peaceful change as the resolution of social problems, normally by institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force.³ In Northern Ireland there have been systematic bombings and assassinations with varying intensity for the past thirty years. Since the mid 1990s there has been a lull in the violence as the Irish Republican Army imposed a unilateral cease-fire, which the Protestant paramilitaries later joined. In Northern Ireland there are not two large armies facing each other across a battlefield, but a state with largely segregated communities in which some citizens use terrorism to advance their political goals. Many of the groups are heavily armed, which is currently one of the sticking points in implementing the Good Friday Agreement. The Irish Republican Army refuses to begin decommissioning prior to May 2000, which was the date agreed upon in the Good Friday Agreement. The Protestants refuse to share power with Sinn Fein unless the Irish Republican Army at least begins decommissioning now. So although the participants in the violence appear to be in the minority, and perhaps it is not large-scale, it is very real and intense, to the point where the peace process and further integration are hanging in the balance.

Deutsch defines security community as a group of people which has become integrated.⁴ My task is to determine whether or not the people of Northern Ireland have a sense of community, have integrated, or are in the process of integrating and have dependable expectations for peaceful exchange. If they have, or are in the process of integrating, then perhaps they can develop a security community. If they

have not, then the leaders of Northern Ireland will have a difficult time implementing the Good Friday Agreement.

Deutsch further breaks down a security community into two types of societies: amalgamated and pluralistic. A pluralistic security community is one in which the groups involved in the integration retain the legal independence of their separate governments. He argues that the relationship between the United States and Canada comprises a pluralistic security community. I would argue that perhaps Britain and Ireland are another. There is an expectation for peaceful exchange and a certain degree of integration through communication and interaction. Meanwhile, both countries retain their own supreme decision-making center.⁵

The second type of security community that Deutsch describes is an amalgamated security community. He defines an amalgamated security community as the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government.⁶ This is the framework that I will apply to the current state of affairs in Northern Ireland. Although the Catholics did not previously have their own independent government I will consider them a separate, unified group. Since the partitioning of Ireland by England in 1922, the Catholics in Northern Ireland had been relegated to second class citizenship. The Protestants have traditionally been in positions of power politically and economically, and as I will demonstrate later, religion is overwhelmingly the factor that colors most every aspect of life in Northern Ireland.

Deutsch points out that integration is a matter of fact, not of time. It does not matter how long it took to integrate, but once they do, the length of time over which

integration persists may contribute to its consolidation. Integration and amalgamation overlap, but one can exist without the other. The United States is an amalgamated and integrated security community. The Habsburg Empire was a non-integrated, amalgamated society that was not a security community.⁷ The U.S. peacefully survives, but the Habsburg Empire has long since dissolved. Northern Ireland is already amalgamated to an extent, and is currently working on furthering the level of amalgamation by implementing the Good Friday Agreement. What I am searching to find out is whether or not Northern Ireland crossed the integration threshold and is now on the road to becoming a security community.

The path to integration is through the achievement of a sense of community that undergirds institutions. When these institutions are agencies for enforcement of the public will, we encounter the dilemma of who polices the police. Can the people of Northern Ireland be certain that the agreements that they have entered into will be reliably enforced or peacefully changed? Deutsch argues that until they can, war may be called upon to do the job, liquidating the disputing parties instead of the dispute.⁸ Compliance can be gained without acceptance, through the use of force. That is the status quo in Northern Ireland. Clearly that path has not been successful over the long-term. As Deutsch notes, compliance without acceptance by large numbers of people is bound to be ineffective or temporary.⁹ This leads us back to sense of community. Both communities of Northern Ireland must accept the government of Northern Ireland as legitimate and credible before they will give it their acceptance. Is the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the police) effectively policed? Is the government

representative of both Protestants and Catholics? Can both sides resolve their issues peacefully, or must they resort to terrorism in order to be heard?

We now turn to the conditions that Deutsch determined are essential (necessary), but not sufficient, for the successful integration of amalgamated security communities. I have listed them below and will address each, separately, later in the text.

Table 1.1 Essential Conditions for the Integration of Amalgamated Security Communities

- (1) the main values of the politically relevant strata must be compatible.
- (2) distinctive way of life with a set of socially accepted values and of institutional means for their pursuit and attainment, as well as a set of established or emerging habits of corresponding behavior.
- (3) expectations of joint rewards for the participating units through strong economic ties or gains envisaged for the future.
- (4) an increase in the political and administrative capabilities of the main political units to be amalgamated.
- (5) the presence of markedly superior economic growth in at least the main participants of amalgamation.
- (6) unbroken links of social communication between the political units concerned and between the politically relevant strata within them.
- (7) broadening of the political, social or economic elite.
- (8) mobility of persons among the main units at least in the politically relevant strata.
- (9) multiplicity and balance of transactions.

The first essential condition for an amalgamated society is that the main values of the politically relevant strata must be compatible. Deutsch argues that values are most effective politically when they were not held merely in abstract terms, but when they were incorporated in political institutions and in habits of political behavior which permitted these values to be acted on in such a way as to strengthen people's attachment to them. He calls this connection between values, institutions and habits a "way of life".

Much of the data I will be using in this paper come from the annual Northern Ireland Social Attitudes (NISA) surveys that began in 1989. NISA is an extension of the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. The intent of these surveys is to assess the attitudinal climate towards various government initiatives. Initially the surveys were funded by a non-profit organization called the Nuffield Foundation. Later, the Government of Northern Ireland funded and administered them through the Central Community Relations Unit, the Central Survey Unit, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Scholars from the University of Ulster and The Queen's University of Belfast have been the significant contributors of analysis of the results.

Since even a survey that appears to be professionally organized and administered can be faulty, I compared the results with other independent surveys. Richard Rose, Edward Moxon-Browne and Jean Whyte conducted similar surveys in 1971, 1983, and 1986 respectively and NISA's results fall within the patterns reflected in their works. In other words, I have not seen drastic changes over this 28 year span. This gives me confidence that although the last NISA survey was in 1994, I can reasonably infer that attitudes since have not changed significantly. Unfortunately, surveys of this magnitude are expensive. One would hope that independent scholars, such as Rose, Moxon-Browne and Whyte will take on the task of future research, so that the trends in relations can continue to be analyzed.

In table 1.2 below, there is a significant variance between the long-term desires of Catholics and Protestants. Breen points out that the major factor that explains variation in constitutional preferences is community background or religion.¹⁰

Overwhelmingly and consistently, Protestants have stated their desire to remain part of the United Kingdom, while just as consistently over half of all Catholics have wanted to reunify with Ireland. Catholics are not as unified in their preferences as the Protestants however, and typically a third desire to remain a part of the United Kingdom. One noteworthy spike is seen in the Catholic position between 1993 and 1994; over 11% changed their mind from wanting to remain a part of the UK to wanting to reunify with Ireland. This sizable jump warrants further monitoring. It could indicate deeper polarization.

Table 1.2 Preferred long-term policy for Northern Ireland by religion (%)

	1989	1990	1991	1993	1994
Protestants					
Remain part of UK	93	93	92	90	90
Reunify Ireland	3	5	4	5	6
Other option	2	1	1	4	3
Don't know	2	1	1	1	1
Not answered	0	0	1	0	0
Catholics					
Remain part of UK	32	33	35	36	24
Reunify Ireland	56	55	53	49	60
Other option	4	5	2	5	7
Don't know	7	6	7	10	8
Not answered	1	1	2	1	1
Others					
Remain part of UK	81	72	79	74	66
Reunify Ireland	13	19	13	13	15
Other option	4	5	4	6	14
Don't know	3	2	4	7	5

A second indicator of political orientation is the amount of faith and trust the two communities place in the major political actors (both internal and external actors) involved in the situation. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 below indicate that Protestants have little trust in the Irish government and surprisingly, not much more in the British

government. It appears that Protestants want to run Northern Ireland themselves, with the support of the British government and troops backing them up. Catholics have more mixed views about who should govern, however most do not trust the British.

Table 1.3 Percentage saying they would trust government just about always or most of the time (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1989	1991	1993	1989	1991	1993
British government under direct rule	15	22	19	32	40	30
Stormont government under local assembly	20	31	31	67	73	65
Irish government in united Ireland	36	45	37	10	14	11

Table 1.4 Percentage in Northern Ireland saying that ... (%)

	Catholic		Protestant	
	1991	1993	1991	1993
... there should be a united Ireland:	53	49	4	5
... the Union should be maintained:	35	36	92	90
... British troops should be withdrawn:	49	47	11	10
... British troops should not be withdrawn:	38	39	86	85

Long term preferences are but one aspect of political life and do not in themselves discount the possibility of compatible values in day-to-day activities. I turn then to perceptions of identity to see if there is perhaps any commonality in that aspect of 'way of life' for the two communities.

Table 1.5 Religion and national identity

	1968 ^[1]		1978 ^[2]		1986 ^[3]		1989	
	Prot. %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Cath. %
British	39	20	67	20	65	6	68	6
Irish	20	76	8	69	3	61	3	60
Ulster	32	5	20	6	14	1	10	2
N. Irish	-	-	-	-	11	20	16	25

[1] Rose, 1971,

[2] Moxon-Browne, 1983,

[3] Whyte, 1990

Table 1.6 Would you describe yourself as ... (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1986	1989	1993	1986	1989	1993
British	9	8	12	65	68	69
Irish	61	60	61	3	3	2
Ulster	1	2	1	14	10	15
Northern Irish	20	25	24	11	16	11

Tables 1.5 and 1.6 above reflect the national identities that Protestants and Catholics have used to describe themselves since 1968. Looking at both tables, since 1986, typically, around 60% of Catholics consider themselves to be Irish. A scant 3% of Protestants think of themselves as Irish. One interesting note is that before the “troubles” began in the early 1970s, only 39% of Protestants considered themselves to be British. It seems that the violence of the “troubles” drove more of them into that category, because ever since, two-thirds of Protestants consider themselves British. The same change occurred in the Catholic community. In 1968 and 1978, 20% of Catholics considered themselves to be British. Since 1986, only 6-12% of Catholics consider themselves to be British. This change may open the door to a reversal of identity perceptions if the violence can be eliminated and the “ghosts” of the violence put to rest.

The one area that might indicate some commonality is where some people from both communities consider themselves to be Northern Irish. One must be careful in taking this as much more than a geographical designation as opposed to a sense of unity between communities, but integration has to begin somewhere and perhaps a Northern Irish identity is the place. Identity is often situationally determined; Protestants say that they feel most Irish when interacting with someone from England or watching Ireland play rugby.¹¹

For his second essential condition for an amalgamated society, Deutsch found that in all cases of successful amalgamation there was a distinctive way of life with a set of socially accepted values and of institutional means for their pursuit and attainment, as well as a set of established or emerging habits of corresponding behavior.¹² One question in this category, with regards to Northern Ireland, is whether or not there is emerging a sense of unity or "Northern Ireland-ness". Have the two sides begun to shift some loyalty from their smaller, old political groups to the unified, higher level?

Tables 1.7 and 1.8 below indicate just how divided the political parties of Northern Ireland are, along religious lines. As the tables indicate, virtually no Catholics support the Unionist parties nor do any Protestants support the Nationalist parties.¹³ The one indication of integration is found in the Alliance party, which is the only major party comprised of both Catholics and Protestants, and receives about 5-10% of the vote in any given election. These numbers lead one to believe that except for the Alliance party, there is very little merging of Catholics and Protestants into a mutual Northern Irish political entity.

Perhaps the one caveat to these numbers is the indication that those parties who are to a small degree, more moderate, pragmatic, cooperative and conciliatory tend to garner more votes than those that lean more to the extremes. Knox points out that in the 1994 local government elections, 1998 Nobel Peace Prize winner, David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) won 29.3% of the vote, and his co-recipient, John Hume's Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) won 21.9%. The ultra-loyalist Reverend Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) won

17.2% and nationalist Gerry Adam's Sinn Fein garnered but 12.5%. As is typical, the Alliance Party won only 7.7% of the vote.¹⁴ It is widely acknowledged that the members of the IRA and the Protestant paramilitary groups typically give their support to Sinn Fein and DUP respectively.

Table 1.7 Support for Unionist and Nationalist parties and Alliance according to religion (%)

	1989	1990	1991	1993	1994
Protestants					
Unionist	88	90	87	88	86
Alliance	12	10	12	11	14
Nationalist	0	0	1	1	0
Catholics					
Unionist	3	1	1	2	0
Alliance	11	14	13	13	11
Nationalist	86	85	86	86	89
Others					
Unionist	50	67	65	58	51
Alliance	34	26	29	24	25
Nationalist	16	7	6	19	24

Table 1.8 Political partisanship, Northern Ireland parties only (%)

	Catholic				Protestant			
	1989	1990	1991	1993	1989	1990	1991	1993
Official Unionist	1	1	-	-	50	53	51	49
Democratic Unionist	1	-	-	1	19	17	14	19
Alliance Party	7	7	9	8	10	7	9	9
SDLP	44	44	49	44	-	-	1	1
Sinn Fein	7	7	10	8	-	-	1	1
Workers' Party	5	3	2	6	2	1	1	-
None	28	24	16	22	10	13	14	12

For his third essential condition for an amalgamated society, with regards to expectations, Deutsch found that all cases of successful amalgamation were preceded by widespread expectations of joint rewards for the participating units through strong economic ties or gains envisaged for the future.¹⁵ Deutsch acknowledges that non-economic expectations are also essential: greater social and political equality or of

greater social or political rights or liberties. The issue in Northern Ireland is whether or not both parties have an expectation for a better life through amalgamation.

Table 1.9 Percentage saying Catholics and Protestants are treated equally by ... (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1989	1991	1993	1989	1991	1993
... the National Health Service in treating patients:	94	92	94	86	88	86
... the Courts in treating those accused of non-terrorist offences:	76	80	79	84	87	86
... Government unemployment schemes in treating applicants for a place:	81	75	73	70	68	65
... the NI Housing Executive in treating applicants for a home:	71	63	67	64	63	58
... Central government in Stormont in treating job applicants:	42	47	46	56	59	60
... Local District Councils in treating job applicants:	45	42	43	55	57	57
... the Courts in treating the accused of terrorist offences:	54	52	53	79	79	79
... the RUC in treating the public:	38	39	41	71	71	73
... the Army in treating the public:	43	38	42	74	70	71
... the UDR/RIR in treating the public:	22	20	30	62	57	60

These numbers reflect that although in some areas Catholics increasingly feel they are getting equal treatment, there are still areas in which they perceive that they are discriminated against. The Good Friday Agreement addresses these concerns with calls for reforming the RUC and for leaders to treat all constituents equally. Gallagher notes that with regards to government schemes to assist the less fortunate a clear majority feel that Protestants and Catholics are treated equally, however Catholics are much more likely to believe there is inequitable treatment from the various components of the security apparatus.¹⁶

Table 1.10 Percentage saying that the chances of Catholics and Protestants getting a job are ... (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1989	1991	1993	1989	1991	1993
... the same	30	29	41	60	62	61
... different	60	59	55	30	30	32

Table 1.11 If the chances are different, which group is more likely to get a job? (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1989	1991	1993	1989	1991	1993
Catholics	1	2	2	43	49	41
Protestants	89	82	86	34	26	28
Don't know/depends	10	16	12	22	25	31

Table 1.12 Percentage saying they support or oppose the Fair Employment Law requiring employers to monitor employees' religion (%)

	Catholic			Protestant		
	1989	1991	1993	1989	1991	1993
Support	64	88	91	42	60	64
Oppose	27	7	6	49	34	31

As the numbers above reflect, two-thirds of Catholics feel there is discrimination against them in hiring practices, while only one-third of Protestants feel the same way. As a result of the Fair Employment Act of 1989, Catholics' opportunities have improved. Unfortunately, much like in the case of America's affirmative action programs, about a third of Protestants feel that the Fair Employment Act unfairly favors Catholics and reverse-discriminates against them. A reflection of the effectiveness of the Fair Employment Act, is the bright spot in the numbers from Table 1.11: the 11% rise from 1989-1993 in Catholics' perceptions that the chance of getting a job was the same for both communities. Additionally, many Protestant fears were overcome and support for the Fair Employment Act rose by 22% over the same period.

Deutsch's next essential requirements fall under capabilities and communication processes. Deutsch's fourth essential condition for an amalgamated society is that there be an increase in the political and administrative capabilities of the main political units to be amalgamated. This one will largely have to be analyzed in years to come, as we cannot now know how effective the amalgamating aspects of the

Good Friday Agreement will work out. The data noted above with regards to the success of the Fair Employment Act indicates that there are success stories going on in Northern Ireland and some government actions have improved the situation.

The fifth essential requirement is for the presence of markedly superior economic growth in at least the main participants of amalgamation. Stevenson points out that "few EU members have made out as well as the Irish Republic, whose "Celtic tiger" economy owes much of its vitality to EU subsidies." Ireland's exports to Europe rose from 12% in 1970 to 47% in 1995. Northern Ireland on the other hand, still receives \$5 billion annually from Britain to keep its economy going.¹⁷ Clearly, there is opportunity for success on the island, as Northern Ireland's southern neighbor is demonstrating. Stevenson is an advocate for the theory that the European Union will make many of the contentious issues of Northern Ireland go away; boundaries will become less important and cultural and religious issues will become minimized. So far this has yet to occur, although some economic benefits from EU membership are being realized.

Surprisingly, at times, the Protestant leaders of Northern Ireland have attempted to distance Northern Ireland from Britain in order to increase economic benefits. During Britain's mad cow disease beef ban, the leader of the DUP, Rev. Ian Paisley, one of the most vehement unionist politicians in Northern Ireland, sought to have the European Union treat the entire island of Ireland as a single entity so as to allow Northern Ireland to be able to trade beef. Since Northern Ireland is part of Britain, it's beef was included in the ban, while the Republic of Ireland's beef was not. Northern Ireland has understandably had an international image problem. The

leaders' desire is that the Good Friday Agreement works and peace holds, allowing Northern Ireland to, among other things, reap the benefits of tourist dollars and foreign investment that the rest of the Emerald Isle already enjoys.

The sixth essential requirement for amalgamation calls for unbroken links of social communication between the political units concerned and between the politically relevant strata within them. In the tables below we can see that the majority of those surveyed in 1996 felt that inter-communal relations were better than, or at least the same as, five years before. Similar numbers reflect the hope for future improvements.

Table 1.13 What about relations between Protestants and Catholics? Would you say that they are better than they were 5 years ago, worse or about the same now as then?

	1989			1996		
	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %
Better	21	23	20	46	47	44
Worse	28	31	26	11	10	11
Same	47	44	50	42	41	43
Other	2	2	2	-	-	-
Don't know	*	*	1	*	*	*
No answer	*	*	1	*	*	*

Table 1.14 And what about relations in 5 years time? Do you think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better than now, worse than now, or about the same as now?

	1989			1996		
	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %
Better	25	30	22	43	48	39
Worse	16	16	16	8	4	10
Same	54	51	56	42	43	41
Other	*	*	1	2	1	3
Don't know	5	4	5	6	4	7
No answer	1	*	1	-	-	-

Britain and Northern Ireland have placed community relations at the top of their lists of governmental priorities. The Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) was established in 1987 and is responsible for reviewing governmental policies and procedures and advising governmental leaders with the aim of bringing the two sides of the community towards greater understanding. In 1990 Northern Ireland established the Community Relations Council (CRC) which serves as a semi-autonomous charitable resource center for groups and individuals working to improve community relations. The tables below indicate that perhaps these initiatives have had some success, as there appears to be a certain level of trust and desire to integrate the two communities further.

Table 1.15 If you had a choice, would you prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only your own religion, or in a mixed-religion neighbourhood?

	1989			1996		
	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %
Only own	23	18	27	14	11	17
Mixed	70	75	67	82	85	80
Don't know	5	6	5	4	5	3
No answer	1	1	2	-	-	-

Table 1.16 And if you were working and had to change your job, would you prefer a workplace with people of only your own religion, or a mixed-religion workplace?

	1989			1996		
	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %	Total %	Cath. %	Prot. %
Only own	11	7	14	3	2	4
Mixed	83	86	81	96	97	95
Don't know	5	6	3	2	2	1
No answer	1	1	2	-	-	-

In spite of these optimistic numbers, the reality is a very segregated society. Hughes and Carmichael argue that there has been an “increasing spatial polarization of the population of Northern Ireland since the resumption of the troubles, as for example, the ‘retreat’ of Protestants from many border areas, and to the eastern parts of Northern Ireland generally. In a very real sense, therefore, the professed willingness of respondents for mixed living contrast vividly with the reality trends on the ground.”¹⁸ Gallagher also points out that although most people favor more cross-community contact in residential areas and the workplace, cross-community contact in social areas is quite low; there is a high level of endogamy. “A majority of both Catholics and Protestants say the most or all of their relatives, friends and neighbors are of the same religion as themselves.”¹⁹ A comparison of the 1989 and 1993 surveys show little change:

Table 1.17 Percentage saying that all or most of their. (%)

	Catholic		Protestant	
	1989	1993	1989	1993
... neighbours are of the same religion	62	62	67	67
... friends are of the same religion	63	57	72	67
... relatives are of the same religion	82	83	89	91

Moxon-Browne notes that Rose found in his 1971 survey that only 5% of marriages crossed the communal divide; ten years later he himself found the proportion to be the same. By 1991 the percentage had dropped to 4%. He argues that the consistency of the figures not only points to a crystallization of the sectarian division in Northern Ireland, but a strong belief in maintaining such a division.²⁰

Lastly, I would point out the slight delta between the high percentage of those who advocate further integration of the workplace and neighborhoods and those who would actually send their own children to a mixed school. In table 1.15, 82% of

Catholics and Protestants responded that they would prefer to live in mixed neighborhoods, and in table 1.16, 96% would prefer a mixed workplace. The percentage of Catholics and Protestants that would send their children to mixed schools is only 62% however, belying an attitude toward integration that suggests that it is a good idea, "just not for me or my family". The positive aspect is that the numbers willing to integrate went up 9% in five years.

Table 1.18 And if you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer a school with children of only your own religion, or a mixed-religion school?

	1989			1996		
	Total	Cath.	Prot.	Total	Cath.	Prot.
Only own	39	37	41	34	38	31
Mixed	53	54	52	62	57	65
Don't know	8	9	6	5	6	4
No answer	1	-	1	-	-	-

The seventh requirement is for a broadening of the political, social or economic elite.²¹ The strength of the UUP over the DUP and the SDLP over Sinn Fein within the two communities could be an indication that the strength of a moderate and pragmatic center is growing. Although Trimble's UUP and Hume's SDLP only garner about 10% more of the vote than their more extreme political brethren, this could signify a broadening of the political elite. The UUP and the SDLP still have very divergent views and goals, however they are typically more willing to negotiate, communicate and compromise than the DUP and Sinn Fein. The weight of public opinion in support of the moderates was a significant factor in getting the Good Friday Agreement passed. Trimble was under immense political pressure from Paisley for "selling out" the loyalist cause. Positive public opinion gave him the political capital

and courage to continue the peace process and make some difficult compromises on the road to peace.

The eighth essential requirement is for the mobility of persons among the main units at least in the politically relevant strata. Since Northern Ireland is already a somewhat amalgamated society, people, commodities and money flow freely throughout. I do note the apparent segregation, voluntary or otherwise, of neighborhoods as a potential indication that mobility may not be universal in all matters. I concede that even the United States has voluntarily segregated neighborhoods, so this does not necessarily indicate a failure to meet this condition.

Deutsch's last essential requirement for an amalgamated society is for a multiplicity and balance of transactions. It is not enough for a high level of communications and transactions in only a few areas. Successfully amalgamated societies require a large range of different common functions and services, together with different institutions and organizations to carry them out. I have mentioned many of the pertinent transactions and interactions previously. Currently Northern Ireland is a neatly divided society, where each side lives within its own community, reading its own newspapers, attending its own schools and churches, voting in its own parties and working in its own businesses. On the other hand, although the two parties are largely segregated socially, government services and activities are not. The Good Friday Agreement encourages the growth of integration in this area, while the many inter-communal agencies such as the CCRU encourage integration, or at least mutual understanding.

In addition to the above mentioned nine conditions, Deutsch adds three other conditions that may be essential as well. He argues that there needs to be a balance in the flow of communications and transactions between the political units and over a period of time and the flow of rewards should also balance; a not too infrequent interchange of group roles; considerable mutual predictability of behavior.²² Members of an amalgamated society must be able to expect from one another some dependable interlocking, interchanging, or at least compatible behavior; and they must therefore be able, at least to that extent, to predict one another's actions. The opposite of successful predictions of behavior is the characteristic fear of alleged treacherousness, secretiveness, or unpredictability of "foreigners" (the other party).²³

Northern Ireland has come a long way in leveling the playing field for the Catholic community. The rewards of amalgamation in Northern Ireland are more equitable now than in years past, due in part to government legislation such as the Fair Employment Act. The interchangeability of roles is yet to be seen. Statisticians and census experts predict that the Catholic community, with its higher birthrates, will become the majority population in Northern Ireland sometime in the middle of the next century. The Protestants' ability to peacefully allow Catholics to rule and Catholics' ability to guarantee Protestants' rights will determine if the elements are present to meet this condition. The last condition basically calls for trust. Trust appears to be vaguely present in the mainstream, but the wounds of terrorism are still fresh and neither side trusts the other's extreme elements. The current stalemate over decommissioning attests to this fact.

In addition to those conditions that Deutsch found essential to the success of an amalgamated society, he found certain conditions present in those cases where the societies disintegrated. These conditions were not sufficient in themselves to cause disintegration. Many successful cases possessed some of the negative conditions themselves. Overall, Deutsch found that the “establishment and preservation of amalgamated security communities thus turned out to depend upon a balance of favorable and adverse conditions.” Even with the presence of the nine conditions essential for amalgamation, the disintegrative conditions could prevent, destroy or at least endanger an amalgamated security community.

Deutsch puts his disintegrative conditions in two categories: conditions that increase the burdens upon amalgamated governments and conditions that reduce the capability of such governments to cope with the burdens put upon them.²⁴

Table 1.19 Disintegrative Conditions in Unsuccessfully Integrated Amalgamated Societies

Conditions that Increase the Burdens Upon Amalgamated Governments

- (1) excessive military commitments
- (2) a substantial increase in political participation on the part of populations, regions, or social strata which previously had been politically passive.
- (3) an increase in ethnic or linguistic differentiation.

Conditions that Reduce the Capability of Such Governments to Cope with the Burdens put Upon Them

- (4) prolonged economic decline.
- (5) closure of established political elite.
- (6) excessive delays in social, economic or political reforms, which had come to be expected by the population.
- (7) failure of the formerly strong or privileged group to adjust psychologically and politically to its loss of dominance.

The burden of excessive military commitments is the first disintegrative condition. In this case, Deutsch is writing about rent seeking upon the smaller or

weaker members of the new society. Unless a war against a foreign state begins, this condition does not directly apply to Northern Ireland. One hypothetical situation that could develop would be if the RUC integrated and had to fight an intense conflict against terrorists. Perhaps then police from one side or the other might find themselves in a position where they felt conflicted fighting against members of their own community. An article in the March 20, 1999, issue of *The Economist* suggests that one reason there are so few Catholics in the RUC (93% Protestant) is that Catholics who joined the force have often been murdered by the IRA.²⁵

The second disintegrative condition is a substantial increase in political participation on the part of populations, regions, or social strata which previously had been politically passive. This too fails to apply directly in Northern Ireland as all parties currently participate in the political process. Another hypothetical situation that could develop in the long term would be if Protestants became desperate and broke away from the society as Catholics overtake them as the majority population later in the century.

The third disintegrative condition is the increase in ethnic or linguistic differentiation. Although some Catholic groups strongly encourage the use and study of the Irish language, in reality, it is more an attempt to maintain a fading piece of their cultural history than to introduce it as a mainstream language. Virtually everyone in Northern Ireland speaks English. On the other hand, the fundamental problem in Northern Ireland is ethnic differentiation. One's religion and national orientation determines every aspect of social and political life and this factor has been the stumbling point throughout the history of the troubles. The Good Friday

Agreement includes segments calling for greater use and study of the Irish language.

Gallagher notes that Protestant opposition to the requirement for their children to study Irish culture, language and the Catholic religion is still strong.²⁶

Table 1.20 RESPONDENTS AGREEING THAT ALL SECONDARY AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL PUPILS SHOULD HAVE TO STUDY ...

	Catholic		Protestant	
	1989 %	1991 %	1989 %	1991 %
... The history of:				
Northern Ireland	69	82	73	80
Britain	63	68	80	85
the Republic of Ireland	71	73	50	57
... Protestant religious beliefs	52	57	37	49
... Catholic religious beliefs	60	63	29	35
... Irish language and culture	59	64	23	18

The fourth disintegrative condition is prolonged economic decline. Some scholars argue that the extreme violence of the 1970s was sparked by the poor economic conditions in Northern Ireland and the second class economic status of the Catholics. Of late, some have referred to the Republic of Ireland as a "Celtic tiger" because of the economic success it has enjoyed. Northern Ireland has also seen some success as the violence has diminished and investment increased. As previously noted, some Protestants, particularly in the working class, resent the economic gains Catholics have made in recent years, believing that it has been at their expense. If the economy of Northern Ireland were to go into a long-term decline, the inter-communal relations would undoubtedly suffer.

The fifth disintegrative condition is the closure of established political elite. In the past elected Catholic leaders, such as Gerry Adams, refused to take their seats in the British parliament out of protest of the situation in Northern Ireland. At times Sinn Fein's leaders were excluded from talks because of the terrorist acts that the IRA

committed. The Good Friday Agreement is an inclusive treaty that allows all parties to participate in the government. If Protestant political domination resumes or if Catholics feel participation is futile, this factor could come into play. Currently Trimble's UUP and Paisley's DUP are demanding that the IRA begin decommissioning ahead of the May 2000 deadline agreed to in the Good Friday Agreement. If the IRA does not show good faith and do so, the Protestants insist that they will exclude Sinn Fein's members from the executive council, of which Trimble is the First Deputy. Of course this is a very specific example of eliminating political elite from a new organization, but it is also very indicative of the danger this type of politics poses to the success of the peace process.

Although Sinn Fein is the political arm of the IRA, increasingly politicians such as Gerry Adams are claiming that they cannot control the actions of the IRA. To make matters worse, some ultra-extreme groups such as the Real IRA, disagree with the peace process and have splintered off from the IRA. They are threatening to continue the war. Adams cannot control them but he may be held responsible for their actions.

The sixth condition is the problem of excessive delays in social, economic or political reforms, which had come to be expected by the population. One striking example of this problem is the current issue over decommissioning. The public on both sides had high hopes that the Good Friday Agreement was a new beginning for Northern Ireland. As Protestants and Sinn Fein debate over decommissioning, many are growing weary and some are beginning to second-guess the agreement. Other reforms, such as equal employment opportunities, had already been implemented

before the Good Friday Agreement. Others, such as integration and reform of the RUC are yet to be accomplished. The table below reflects the lack of faith half of Catholics have with regards to the RUC handling sectarian violence. There is also a 20-30% difference in satisfaction with the police between Catholics and Protestants in general.

Table 1.21 PERCENTAGE SAYING THE RUC DO A GOOD JOB IN CONTROLLING CRIME

	Catholic		Protestant	
	1990 %	1991 %	1990 %	1991 %
Non-sectarian crime	76	71	92	90
Sectarian crime	53	47	84	80

The seventh factor that encourages disintegration is the failure of the formerly strong or privileged group to adjust psychologically and politically to its loss of dominance. This factor could come to pass in Northern Ireland. As mentioned, some working class Protestants feel that Catholics are getting a better deal than they are as a result of the new equal employment opportunity legislation. The pressure could also rise as Catholics overtake Protestants as the majority population.

I now turn back to my original questions. Do the people of Northern Ireland want to resolve their political issues peacefully? I would say that the vast majority of the people do. The support for the more moderate mainstream parties reflects this desire to get along, as do the desires for more integration of housing and work. You wouldn't want to work or live next door to someone you think is your enemy. The issue holding them back is a lack of trust. Neither side has faith that the terrorists on the other side will not strike out. Deutsch says that the members of a security

community will have expectations of peaceful exchange. These expectations do not yet exist in Northern Ireland.

Is Northern Ireland integrated or has it shown signs of integration? Northern Ireland is not integrated, but there are some indications that integration may be beginning. The small success of the Alliance party indicates that some integration exists. The presence of a "Northern Irish" identity in small numbers could possibly suggest that some integration is occurring as well. Perhaps most significant is the success of Catholics in overcoming years of economic discrimination and the rising public perceptions that hiring practices and governmental activities have become closer to equitable. There are wisps and hints of integration, but they are not strong.

Northern Ireland is still a very divided society. Protestants and Catholics do not marry each other. The vast majority says that their friends, relatives and neighbors are all of the same religion that they are. Catholics and Protestants disagree about the future of their society on whether it should stay with Britain or go with Ireland. Although they say they want more integration, the trends show further polarization in community residential patterns. Although many encourage integration of the schools, over 20% fewer would actually send their children to mixed schools. Voting runs strictly on religious or national orientation based lines.

The final question is whether or not the integrative conditions outweigh the disintegrative. The data I have presented indicate that they do, but not by much. As a professor of mine once said, Americans tend to want every situation where there are multiple ethnic groups present to become a melting pot. Many times, this just is not realistic. You can still have peaceful interaction without intermarrying or mixing

neighborhoods. The challenge for Northern Ireland is to ensure that the extremists do not destroy the fragile peace between the polarized communities. Resolving the iniquity in the society has helped remove much of the main stream Catholic support from the IRA. Additionally, healthy economies have pushed many from both sides towards the center. Integrating and reforming the RUC is perhaps the biggest hurdle yet to be addressed. Sense of community and integration exist but are weak and nascent in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement may be able to build upon this tentative beginning.

Based upon the evidence that I have presented, I have come to the determination that there was not a drastic change in the social or political climate of Northern Ireland during the time leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. The majority of the people from both communities want peace, but trust and commonality do not exist. The support for the more moderate, mainstream parties indicates a willingness to cooperate more in order to have peace, but both sides continue to look at their Northern Irish world through very different conceptual lenses.

The Good Friday Agreement might contribute to building a security community. From a neo-functionalist point of view, the new structures developed by the Good Friday Agreement have the potential to facilitate inter-communal problem solving. If these new institutions function properly, the underlying security community could be strengthened. This process and the healing of wounds could take generations. If the new executive and assembly move beyond the divisive issues of long term national visions and begin to work on the daily issues of building a modern society together, there is the possibility that someday integration could flourish.

Today is not that day. I now turn to the negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement to analyze the contribution of George Mitchell.

Notes

Chapter 1

¹ Karl W. Deutsch, et al. *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, (Princeton University Press, 1957) p 5.

² Deutsch, p 5.

³ Deutsch, p 5.

⁴ Deutsch, p5.

⁵ Deutsch, p6.

⁶ Deutsch, p6.

⁷ Deutsch, p 7.

⁸ Deutsch, p8.

⁹ Deutsch, p8.

¹⁰ Richard Breen. "Who Wants a United Ireland? Constitutional Preferences among Catholics and Protestants" in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland, the fifth report, 1995-1996*, ed. Richard Breen, Paula Devine and Lizanne Dowds. (Blackstaff Press, 1996): chptr 2.

¹¹ Edward Moxon-Browne, "National Identity in Northern Ireland." in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland, the first report*, Eds. Peter Stringer and Gillian Robinson. (Blackstaff Press, 1991): chptr 2.

¹² Deutsch, p48.

¹³ Breen, chptr 2

¹⁴ Colin Knox, "Conflict Resolution and the Macrolevel" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Dec 1994): 596.

¹⁵ Deutsch, p49.

¹⁶ A.M. Gallagher, "Equality, Contact and Pluralism: Attitudes to Community Relations" in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland, the fourth report, 1994-1995*, Eds. Richard Breen, Paula Devine and Gillian Robinson. (Blackstaff Press, 1995): chptr 1.

¹⁷ Jonathon Stevenson. "Peace in Northern Ireland: Why Now?" *Foreign Policy*, (fall 1998): 43-44.

¹⁸ Hughes, Joanne and Paul Carmichael. "Community Relations in Northern Ireland: Attitudes to Contact and Integration" in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland, the seventh report*, chptr 1. Eds. Gillian Robinson, Dierdre Heenan, Ann Marie Gray, and Kate Thompson. (Ashgate Publishing, 1998): chpt 1.

¹⁹ Gallagher, chptr 1.

²⁰ Moxon-Browne, chptr 2.

²¹ Deutsch, p50-52.

²² Deutsch, p 55-56.

²³ Deutsch, p 56-57.

²⁴ Deutsch, p 59.

²⁵ "Northern Ireland's Police" *The Economist* (March 20th 1999): 17.

²⁶ Gallagher, A. M. "Community Relations" in *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland, the third report, 1992 -1993*, chptr 3. Eds. Peter Stringer and Gillian Robinson. (Blackstaff Press, 1993) chptr 3.

Chapter 2

The Negotiations: Mitchell in the Eye of the Storm

In this chapter I will use contemporary mediation theory to analyze the performance of George Mitchell as chairman of the negotiations in Northern Ireland. I will look at Mitchell's overall performance but particularly his entrance and departure, his acceptability as a mediator, his resources and motives, his roles and strategies, and finally, his tactics and the obstacles he faced. My question in this chapter is, given the environment he had to work in, how well did George Mitchell perform as a mediator? I will analyze whether or not his actions were in keeping with mediation theory, considering the situation Mitchell found himself in. The answer will provide further evidence towards understanding the extent of Mitchell's responsibility for the success of the Good Friday Agreement.

In an attempt to replicate and better understand successfully mediated conflicts, we study both the mediators' actions and personalities and the characteristics of the conflicts. In my research I have studied numerous books in which the authors developed a theory, or framework, on conflict mediation. Some of the more noteworthy efforts that I have read include: *Resolving International Conflicts*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch, *The Intermediaries, Third Parties in International Crisis*, by Oran Young, *Intermediaries in International Conflict*, by Thomas Princen, and *Mediation in International Relations*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin.

These authors address those factors and aspects of mediation that I repeatedly came across in my research and appear to be the most significant and influential to the success or failure of mediated negotiations. First I will give an account of what happened over the twenty-two months of negotiations, then, I will address mediation theory and Mitchell's specific role and actions.

After accepting the invitation from the British and Irish governments to chair the negotiations, Mitchell's first obstacle was to actually gain entrance. I will address the specifics later in a section on entrance and acceptability, but suffice it to say that although he was invited, the various parties were not unanimous in agreeing to his selection as chairman. The talks were to begin in June 1996 and the British and Irish governments had already established and published the "ground rules for substantive all-party negotiations", a "scenario for the opening plenary session", an "agenda for the opening plenary session" and "terms of reference for a proposed sub-committee on decommissioning". Included in these arrangements was Mitchell's appointment as chairman of the plenary sessions of the negotiations. Immediately, the two sides, but particularly the Protestants, took issue with the ground rules and agendas, and began political maneuverings to make changes to suit their own positions. These tactics included opposing Mitchell's chairmanship. After waiting for two days to begin, he finally entered the negotiations after midnight and took his seat.

Immediately upon his taking his seat, Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and McCartney of the United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP) walked out in protest. In this baptism by fire into the often demeaning and controversial world of Northern Irish politics, Mitchell writes that he felt it was important for him to "remain

calm, to avoid the swirling doubts I felt...I tried to lift the level of discussion. I reminded the delegates of the huge and important issue, which had brought them together: the pursuit of peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. I again pledged to act in a fair and impartial manner and assured them that my only interest was to be helpful to them and to the people of Northern Ireland...I felt that it was important that something be accomplished at this first meeting other than assuming the chair.”¹ It was then that he required each party to pledge compliance to the Mitchell Principles.

In spite of the two Protestant parties walking out, Mitchell was now the chairman of the negotiations. His first order of business was to reestablish rules of procedure, or ground rules, to include what his authority would be as chairman. The debate over the ground rules focused on two areas. The first complaint came from the Protestants, who took issue with prior agreements between the British and Irish governments, such as the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 and the Downing Street Declaration of 1993, which they felt included provisions threatening the union and would lead to a united Ireland. The current ground rules stemmed from these prior agreements. The nationalists favored adoption of the ground rules. The second area of contention was over Mitchell’s appointment as chairman and his level of authority. The Protestants wanted a chairman with little authority, while the Catholics wanted one with substantial authority.²

In addition to the ground rules, Mitchell had to reestablish the basic agenda for the negotiations. The Protestant party leaders had dismissed both the ground rules and

agenda previously established by the governments. The establishment of ground rules and an agenda may sound simple, but in this environment it was anything but.

Previous agreements had called for an assembly to govern Northern Ireland and north-south councils, by which the Republic of Ireland would have input in Northern Ireland. The Protestants wanted a strong assembly with the north-south councils under its control. With their current majority, they could expect to control the assembly. They also wanted the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to decommission its weapons before they could enter into negotiations. The Catholics wanted a weak assembly and north-south councils that were independent of the assembly. The political party leaders of Sinn Fein continued to argue that they did not control the IRA. The leaders from both sides filtered every ground rule and agenda entry through these overriding issues and positions. It was not until 15 October 1996 that Mitchell was finally able to get the two sides to agree on the basic agenda for the opening plenary session. It took four months for the two governments and ten parties (minus Sinn Fein, who was still waiting for approval to enter) to agree to the following simple and modest agenda:

Agenda for Remainder of the Opening Plenary

1. Circulation and Introduction of Proposals regarding the Comprehensive Agenda.
2. Consideration of the International Body's proposal on decommissioning:
 - a) discussion of proposals;
 - b) participants' commitment to work constructively to implement agreements on decommissioning;
 - c) consideration of, and agreement on, mechanisms necessary to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning alongside negotiations in three strands.
3. Discussion and Adoption of Comprehensive Agenda

4. Launch of three-stranded negotiations and establishment of agreed mechanisms on decommissioning.
5. Concluding remarks by Independent Chairman.³

In the negotiations, strand one included those issues dealing with governing Northern Ireland. Strand two addressed the north-south issues and institutions, while strand three addressed British-Irish issues and relations.

Besides the regular problems of getting two warring communities to come to agreement on anything, Mitchell also had to face disruptive problems caused by the recurring acts of terrorism. Many of the groups and parties that did not believe in or approve of the negotiations continued their campaign of violence in hopes of disrupting the talks. Additionally, because the parties had agreed to the Mitchell Principles, every time there was a bombing or assassination, the parties on the opposite side would demand the expulsion of the party associated with the responsible paramilitary organization. There was no previous rule or procedure on how to handle such a situation, so Mitchell established one on the spot, leaving the governments with the final adjudication on each case.

Another problem Mitchell had to overcome was the matter of the right to bring a vote on any issue, at any time. Protestant leaders McCartney and Paisley wanted to end the talks and inflict political damage on Trimble, so they demanded a vote on prior decommissioning. They knew that Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) would appear weak if they changed their stance and voted against prior decommissioning, but on the other hand, if the UUP voted for it, there would never be a peace agreement. Mitchell had to decide if any party in the talks could demand a

vote whenever they wanted to. After he solicited the view of each party orally and in writing, Mitchell wrote,

“I reviewed the positions of the parties, noting especially that several had emphasized that we were involved in a political negotiation, not a legislative process. I further noted that even in legislative bodies like the British Parliament and the U.S. Congress there is no absolute right for a member to get a vote. I concluded that each participant to these talks has the right to raise any significant and relevant issue of concern to them and to receive a fair and reasonable hearing on these issues. Such right does not include the absolute right to have a vote on each issue. That is a matter for the participants as a whole to decide.”⁴

On July 20 1997 the IRA announced a cease-fire, thereby opening the door for Sinn Fein to join the negotiations. Sinn Fein's entrance led to the DUP's and UKUP's final walkout from the talks. Additionally, it increased the tension in the negotiations, since none of the remaining Protestant leaders would speak directly to Sinn Fein's leaders. This complicated Mitchell's task significantly.

True negotiations, rather than just discussion and debates on how the negotiations would proceed, finally began in October 1997. Summer marching seasons, August holidays, Christmas holidays, periodic violence, debate over rules and agendas, debate over participation in the talks of certain parties, such as Sinn Fein, and just plain old intransigence had dragged out the negotiations for months. Mitchell focused the negotiations on developing a detailed and comprehensive agenda that would address the specifics of “constitutional issues; nature, form and extent of new arrangements; and rights and safeguards.” Despite significant activity, very little progress was made. The parties continued to restate orally the same positions previously submitted in writing. Mitchell wrote, “although I tried, I was unable to get a genuine negotiation underway. Something else was needed to provide a spark—to

generate some give and take...the next step was to prepare and agree on a document that would identify the key issues for resolution—essentially a more detailed comprehensive agenda.”⁵

With a comprehensive agenda to focus them, substantial negotiations finally got underway and Mitchell was able to focus on the details of building an agreement. It was during this period that he worked with the different parties trying to build a consensus. He went room to room getting proposals and making counter proposals. He asked the leaders to submit position papers on various issues and then consolidated and crafted the different positions into a single proposal for them to review. It was during the period after the Christmas holidays, from January 1998 until the agreement was signed on 10 April 1998 that the peace process finally got rolling. Mitchell’s tactic of setting Good Friday as a deadline facilitated the sense of purpose and urgency. In the final weeks, many of the participants worked around the clock to meet the deadline.

Mitchell started his journey in June 1996 and finished in April 1998. Northern Ireland finally had an agreement. The people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland approved the agreement with 85% in favor. Mitchell and his fellow participants had overcome many doubts, obstacles and a determined opposition. To better understand how and why this happened, I now turn to mediation theory and Mitchell’s characteristics and actions as chairman.

Entrance

Clausewitz argued that war is merely politics by other means. Jacob Bercovitch, a scholar and author in the field of international mediation writes

"mediation is the continuation of negotiations by other means". Two contentious parties can negotiate by themselves, face to face. They do not necessarily need a mediator. There are times, however, when a mediator can be a great asset to negotiations and perhaps the final factor that tips the scales towards a peaceful settlement.

As mentioned earlier in this essay, Mitchell became involved in Northern Ireland gradually. Initially he led a conference on commerce and investment in Northern Ireland at the request of President Clinton. After getting his feet wet with the conference, Mitchell became chairman of the independent body on decommissioning. The British and Irish governments were at an impasse on disarming and wanted a respected, independent body to provide recommendations. Clinton asked Mitchell to be the chairman. This experience gave Mitchell an education in Northern Irish politics and introduced him to the many important players. Through his performance as chairman, he was able to impress the various players with his ability to handle a complex and contentious matter. As a result, he was personally invited back by the Irish and British leadership to chair the subsequent negotiations.

When is the ideal time for a mediator to get involved in conflict negotiations? Both conflicting parties must want to negotiate for mediation to be successful. In addition to understanding that the conflict is at a stalemate, or at least that any further gains will be cost prohibitive, the protagonists have to be willing to request or accept mediation. This in itself can be a significant obstacle due to factors such as domestic pressure against settling or cooperating and leaders' pride. The Reverend Ian Paisley, leader of the DUP and Robert McCartney, leader of the UKUP were both dead against

the negotiations or compromising in any way. Both stormed out when Mitchell initially entered the negotiations and again when Sinn Fein was allowed to join the process. These two leaders and their parties had not yet reached the point where they accepted that the status quo was untenable and were not yet ready to accept mediation. Fortunately, their participation was not necessary for success. Without their disruptive and contentious behavior, the negotiations may have actually been easier. Mitchell writes:

The decision by Paisley and McCartney to quit the talks was predictable. It was so much a part of their rhetoric, so deeply ingrained in their political convictions, that there could be no doubt about their intention. Yet, if their objective was, as they repeatedly insisted, to end this process, then their walkout was a fateful error. Reaching agreement without their presence was extremely difficult; it would have been impossible with them in the room... Their absence freed the UUP [Trimble] from daily attacks at the negotiating table, and gave the party room to negotiate that it might not otherwise have had. To their credit, when the time came, the Ulster Unionists rose to the occasion.⁶

The leaders of the majority parties on both sides in Northern Ireland had the power of public opinion behind them. One indication that the people of Northern Ireland were war-weary and tired of the violence is the result of the 22 May 1998, all-Irish peoples' vote on the Good Friday Agreement. 85% of those voting said yes to approval. It may have taken the politicians two years to agree on the fine print, but the people of Northern Ireland left no doubt that they wanted peace right away. Although written after approval of the Good Friday Agreement, the following 7 August 1999 article by Mick Maguire, of *Ireland Today*, reflects the feelings of the people of Northern Ireland then and now:

Bread and butter issues in Northern Ireland are more important to the bulk of the electorate than are political considerations and politicians opposing the Good Friday Agreement are becoming more and more out of touch with public opinion. An opinion poll conducted by the University of Ulster shows that 82% of all voters in Northern Ireland are in favour of compromise which will create conditions under which everyone in Northern Ireland can flourish. The poll also shows a surprising amount of optimism about the future of Northern Ireland. However, the respondents were quick to point out that there is still apprehension about change. Most importantly the poll shows that the people of Northern Ireland are losing their patience with their political leaders. Remarkably in a Northern Ireland society that often gives the impression that one's political preference is the most important element to be considered, the poll found that most people are more concerned about the ordinary everyday things that effect their lives. Concerns about health care, education and employment were foremost in the minds of most of the respondents.⁷

With opinion polls indicating that the majority of the general public was tired of the violence and wanted their leaders to negotiate, David Trimble of the UUP and John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) had the support they needed to continue. Mitchell writes of the 1997 elections in which the UUP and David Trimble did well. "Trimble had taken two risks, backing me for chairman and agreeing to a preliminary agenda. For both, he had been flayed by Paisley and McCartney. But his actions appeared not to have hurt him or his party politically. Perhaps now he would be prepared to take even bigger risks."⁸ The UUP regularly received the most votes of any Protestant party and the SDLP of any Catholic party.

On the other hand, some smaller, extremist parties that refused to give up their contentious ways made numerous attempts to sabotage the peace process by walking out of the negotiations, criticizing those that continued on and using terrorism. Mitchell writes that during one of the many furors over the decommissioning of arms, "they [UUP] had Paisley and McCartney on the outside, daily accusing them of selling out the union. Then again, they had public opinion (at least through opinion polls)

urging them to stay in the talks.”⁹ As a result, Mitchell faced a group split not only into Catholic and Protestant camps, but into those willing to negotiate and those working against the peace process.

Lawrence Susskind and Eileen Babbitt write, "disputants must realize that they are unlikely to get what they want through unilateral action. Often in the early stages of a dispute, one party believes that it can prevail-either by force or threat of force. This may well be a false assumption, and that party must re-evaluate its ability to impose its will on the other." They further argue that the alternatives to agreement must involve unacceptable economic or political costs. When the alternatives to settlement become onerous enough, the parties consider negotiation.¹⁰ These scholars argue that once war-weariness sets in on a violent conflict, the time is ripe for mediation. Based upon his extensive experiences and dealings there, Mitchell believes that the people of Northern Ireland are definitely war-weary. "The people of Ireland are sick of war. They are sick of sectarian killings and random bombings. They are sick of the sad elegance of funerals, especially those involving the small white coffins of children, prematurely laid into the rolling green fields of the Irish countryside. They want peace."¹¹

Northern Ireland was clearly ripe for mediation in this sense. Not only was the general public tired of the violence, but the economy was suffering from it as well. Many people have taken to calling the Republic of Ireland the "Celtic Tiger" because of the economic success it is enjoying. Largely because the violence has scared off investors and tourists, Northern Ireland has missed out on this opportunity. There is, for most people, a realization that continued violence is not going to allow either side

to attain its national goals. Terrorism by the IRA and other nationalists will not drive the British out of Northern Ireland and unite the island. Terrorism by the Protestant paramilitaries will not keep the Catholics subordinated or prevent them from striking out, but rather encourage a conflict spiral. Mitchell writes

“they [the majority of unionists] knew that there could never be a return to the dominant days of the past. Of course not all unionists feel this way. Some do yearn for the past. Some steadfastly deny any previous discrimination. To them, all of the problems were caused by republican terrorists and agitators who created a false history to advance their goal of a united Ireland. The rhetoric of this faction of unionism had always been enough to stoke nationalist fears and unionist grievances.”¹²

Oran Young argues that conflicts have life cycles and that we should study these cycles from the point of view of various possibilities of third-party intervention. Young posits that developments in public opinion, rigidity and flexibility in decision-making, the impact of shifting fear levels and perceptions of the course of events, and domestic resource mobilization can all impact a party's willingness to negotiate.¹³ The domestic pressures Young mentions may prevent a leader from requesting mediation, lest he appear weak or surrendering to a hated enemy. It is not uncommon for conflicts to take on an appearance of a zero-sum game. The result is that those leaders who desire peace and would like to negotiate have to summon great courage and perhaps go against the will of their own constituents in order to do so.

Although he did not go against his constituents, Trimble did go against his fellow Protestant unionists by supporting the negotiations. In another testimony on the war-weariness of the Irish people and their support for those willing to work for peace, Mitchell writes:

Trimble was trying to negotiate the accommodation necessary to end decades of war in a climate of fear and hostility, amid constant cries of betrayal. What he had going for him, of course, was the desperate longing for peace and normality that existed across Northern Ireland, among both unionists and nationalists. Twenty-five years of brutal sectarian war had scarred the bodies of thousands of men and women; it had more deeply scarred the hearts of everyone. It wasn't so much the numbers killed (3200) and wounded (36,000). It was the fear, the anxiety, which gnawed away at every soul. The highly publicized and emotional funeral had become a regular event in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of people had had enough of that. They were sick of it. They wanted change.¹⁴

George Mitchell mentioned in a speech at Bowdoin College's 1998 commencement exercises that constituents tend to send their political leaders conflicting messages. First, they tell the politicians to settle whatever issue has the two sides squabbling, with the government in gridlock. Second, they tell their leaders to settle the issue on their terms. Although the vast majority of Protestants and Catholics wanted peace, they still didn't want their leaders to "give away the farm" to get it.

Thomas Princen argues that the best time for a mediator's entry depends upon the particular situation. He argues that one could justify an early entrance when the protagonists are roughly equal in power, communication has not yet broken down and they have not resorted to contentious tactics. On the other hand, in a case with disparate abilities, the conflict may have to "ripen" to a stalemate before mediation will work.¹⁵ The question for the mediator becomes whether to wait until the parties truly need him and his chances for success are better or enter early and possibly have more intransigent negotiations to prevent the terrible losses of a contentious conflict. Many scholars find that the protagonists are more receptive to mediation and the mediator is more effective if the conflict is ripe.

Regardless of which time is better, George Mitchell did not have the luxury of choosing when to enter this conflict. The 'troubles' of Northern Ireland have been raging for thirty odd years and the debate over sovereignty over the six counties since before the independence of Ireland in 1922. Further delays would only mean more death. Mitchell was not the first person to attempt to mediate this conflict, but many hope he will be the last.

Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston conducted a study to analyze whether mediators have been more successful when entering into negotiations earlier or later. One of the two hypotheses was that a mediator will be more successful if entering once the protagonists find further losses (in this study, fatalities) intolerable. The other argument is that a mediator will have more success if he enters early on, before the sides are polarized and determined to win at all costs. They found, from the results of their study, "a clear and significant relationship between low fatalities and successful mediation."¹⁶ The converse of these results are reflected in those long running conflicts where the parties continually dredge up old wrongs as justification for their current position. They have demonized each other for so long that the thought of negotiating with such an evil adversary becomes next to unthinkable.

This environment of demonization and entrenched positions is where George Mitchell found himself in Northern Ireland. With over 3200 dead and 36,000 wounded, both sides had many examples of past wrongs that they could point to and would regularly do so. This fact indicates that Mitchell's task, as chairman of the negotiations was much more difficult due to the emotional baggage both sides brought to the table. At one point in the negotiations, Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein,

approached Ken Maginnis, a leader in the UUP, in the hallway outside the meeting room. According to Adams, Maginnis replied to him "I don't talk to fucking murderers", and walked away.¹⁷ Additionally, during negotiations, the leaders of the UUP would not speak directly to the leaders of Sinn Fein, but would instead speak through Mitchell. Getting two parties to come to agreement on their future when they won't even speak to each other is a challenge indeed.

In summary, scholars of mediation argue that there is a trade-off when considering the best time to enter into mediations. If the mediator enters early, the two sides may not yet be polarized and bitter, and the lines of communication may still be open. On the other hand, one or both sides may still think that they can 'win' the fight unilaterally. If the mediator enters the negotiations of a ripened conflict, he may very well face two polarized sides with closed lines of communication. The advantage is that the two sides are less likely to think they can still win unilaterally and will therefore accept mediation and be more willing to negotiate and compromise. Mitchell faced the latter situation: two deeply polarized sides with closed lines of communication who, for the most part, realized that violence was taking them nowhere. Mitchell's task would be to overcome the closed lines of communication and total lack of trust.

We cannot, however, simply give up on a conflict just because the prime entry opportunity has passed. It just makes the mediators' task more difficult. In an interview on National Public Radio, Mitchell stated "I believe that there is no such thing as a conflict that can't be ended. Conflict is created and sustained by human beings. No matter how ancient the conflict, no matter how deep the hatred, no matter

how much harm has been caused, peace can prevail. But only if those who stand for peace and justice are supported and encouraged while those who do not are opposed and condemned."

Mitchell's Acceptability

The first step for a mediator, following his entrance into conflict negotiations, is to garner the acceptance of the parties to the conflict. If one or both of the sides do not find the mediator acceptable, the effort is doomed to failure. In addition to the parties viewing the mediator as having the ability and skill to accomplish the task, they must also believe that his particular presence advances the possibility of their achieving a positive settlement. In this vein, one of the issues of scholarly debate covered in the literature was the matter of neutrality and impartiality. Oran Young writes:

In most situations the existence of a meaningful role for a third party will depend on the party's being perceived as an impartial participant (in the sense of having nothing to gain from aiding either protagonist and in the sense of being able to control any feelings of favoritism) in the eyes of the principal protagonists. It should be noted that impartiality differs from neutrality. Impartiality refers to a situation in which the third party favors neither side to a crisis and remains indifferent to the gains and losses of each side. Neutrality, on the other hand, refers to a situation in which the effects of the actions of a third party can be said to have no influence toward terminating a crisis more in favor of one side than the other...the very act of intervening in a crisis at all makes strict neutrality virtually impossible to attain.¹⁸

Thomas Princen looks at the acceptability of a mediator as something akin to a process of elimination. If he were a protagonist, he would, in order of preference, desire a mediator who was an ally, an agent, impartial and lastly, biased against him.¹⁹ Princen argues that since both parties must only find the mediator acceptable,

impartiality is not a necessary condition for a mediator. He cites Egypt's acceptance of President Carter as a mediator in the 1973 Egypt-Israel war as an example of a protagonist accepting his enemy's ally as a mediator. The United States was clearly an ally of Israel's. I would argue, however, that impartiality as Young defined it was still important. President Carter's ability to control feelings of favoritism very likely played an important part in President Sadat's acceptance of him as a mediator in spite of Carter's and the United States' obvious alliance with Israel. As an individual, Carter was able to forge a bond of trust between himself and Sadat. Their personal feelings were perhaps stronger than those between Carter and Begin.

Initially, Paisley of the DUP and McCartney of the UKUP were dead against Mitchell's involvement as chairman of the negotiations. The opposition to Mitchell embarrassed the leadership of the British government because they had invited him to chair the negotiations. Mitchell and his fellow team members, de Chastelain and Holkeri, were forced to spend two days in an anteroom watching on closed circuit televisions as the parties debated whether or not to accept him as chairman. Mitchell likes to recount the story of his first entrance into the negotiating room. The DUP and UKUP still did not accept his participation and as he walked into the room Paisley began yelling "no, no, no, no!" The British government had placed a government official in Mitchell's seat to prevent any of Paisley's or McCartney's people from occupying it. The British were concerned that if they left the seat open someone from one of the two parties would sit there in hopes that the government would then have to force them out, and thereby cause a public furor and delay the proceedings.²⁰ After Mitchell took his seat, Paisley, McCartney and their people walked out of the

negotiations. McCartney claimed that his main problem with Mitchell was not personal. He mostly did not want the British and Irish governments imposing a particular chairman upon them. Even after the agreement was reached to accept Mitchell as chairman, Paisley vowed to skip any session directly under Mitchell's chairmanship, calling him the "Pope" and "a crony of Gerry Adams". Rather than anger or impatience over these outbursts, Mitchell showed only bewilderment. "This is a new experience for me. In 30 years in American politics, no one ever asked what my religion is or where my parents were from."²¹ Welcome to Northern Ireland.

The Protestant majority party, UUP, led by David Trimble, remained in the negotiations, however deputy leader John Taylor said that putting Mitchell in charge of the talks "was the equivalent of appointing an American Serb to preside over talks on the future of Croatia... [it] is a non-runner."²² For the first time in his life, Mitchell was questioned about his religion. Perhaps due to his being Catholic, his relationship with American Irish-Catholics like Senator Ted Kennedy or his prior support as senator for giving Gerry Adams a visa to enter the U.S., the Protestant leadership questioned Mitchell's impartiality. In this environment where everything is leveraged for political gain and propaganda, Paisley's and McCartney's walkout very likely had other purposes as well, since they returned to the negotiations a few days later. They and their fellow party members, after first returning, refused to address Mitchell as Mr. Chairman, preferring to call him Senator, thereby refusing to acknowledge that he had any power in the negotiations. Later in the negotiations, most began to gradually accept him and call him Mr. Chairman.²³ It was vital to Mitchell's acceptance that Trimble and the UUP not walk out with their Protestant brethren when Mitchell

entered. Given that the UUP is the largest Protestant party, if they had walked out, Mitchell's time as chairman would have been over before it began.

James Jonah, in writing about the United Nations (UN) as a mediator argues "that while no UN official could be neutral in terms of moral issues involved in a dispute, they must at all times be impartial. But they could and should be at the same time active, imaginative but discreet, partners in the peace process...they could steer the course of the negotiation toward a just and lasting solution."²⁴ In other words, a mediator should not be simply devising a King Solomon-like 50-50 split in each conflict. In some instances, one protagonist may have gained much more during the conflict, or may be in a much stronger position. Another thorny issue is ferreting out what is "just" and "fair" to both parties. This is particularly difficult when so many on both sides have been hurt.

The scholars agree that mediators simply cannot be neutral. The simple fact that mediators are interested in ending the conflict and involved in the negotiations removes that possibility. The scholarly debate arises over the importance of impartiality, or lack of bias in the mediator. I would argue that the necessity for impartiality would rise and fall depending on the characteristics of the parties and the conflict. What is truly important is more trustworthiness than impartiality. If a protagonist finds a less-than impartial mediator acceptable, that is all that matters. One reason this might be the case is if the mediator comes bearing carrots and/or sticks, as Bercovitch argues. On the other hand, if neither side can agree to a mediator that they perceive favors the other side, then the common denominator is, as Princen argues, an impartial mediator.

As mentioned earlier, during his time on the International Body on Decommissioning Mitchell was concerned that he not appear to be influenced by the British government when providing his recommendation. He did not believe that prior decommissioning would work and went against John Major and his administration when he recommended parallel decommissioning. The chairman of the last negotiations, Sir Ninian Stephen, the former governor-general of Australia, had been perceived as too close to the British government, and as a result, was not effective as chairman. Mitchell's prior performance on the International Body on Decommissioning was a source of reassurance to the parties that he could be impartial.

In the end, all parties accepted Mitchell and questions about impartiality faded away. Only those such as Paisley, who refused to participate, continued to criticize and question. This may be more a reflection on Paisley than on Mitchell. Paisley routinely criticized his fellow Protestant leaders and the British more intensely than he did the Catholic leadership. The initial reservations and questions might have been cast at virtually anyone offered as a candidate for chairman of the negotiations. Because the aspersions about bias ceased, it appears that Mitchell's goal of appearing impartial succeeded. One tactic Mitchell used that may have advanced this end was that he always allowed leaders from both sides to speak without interruption. These gentlemen, like most politicians, can orate for hours, rehashing well rehearsed and often told positions and many often did. Although this made the process very lengthy and repetitious, it assured all participants that they would be heard. Mitchell writes about allowing one of the most severe critics of the peace process, McCartney of UKUP, to speak without interruption:

Most of them had grown impatient with McCartney. In the meetings, several of them tried to get me to cut him off. In private, they gently criticized me for letting him talk so often and so long; they particularly resented it when he strayed off subject. I rejected their complaints. I believe in letting people have their say. It was important, I told them, not to cut anyone off at this stage. When the right time comes, I said, I'll bring this to a conclusion. But no progress was being made anyway, so what was to be gained by cutting him or anyone else off?²⁵

It is interesting that Mitchell was invited by the British government to be chairman, yet it was the Protestants who were the ones most concerned that he would be biased towards the Catholics. Some of these concerns may be caused by the close relationship the U.S. and the Clinton administration had cultivated with the Republic of Ireland. Although the U.S. and Britain have always been close, the Major and Clinton administrations were not always on the best of terms. Protestants are often worried of being sold out by the British, so a close American-British relationship may not have provided much reassurance anyway.

In summary, Mitchell had a baptism by fire when he entered the negotiations. He was not universally accepted and some questioned his impartiality. As a result, he had to make a concerted effort to overcome preconceived notions of partiality. In the end, his previous performance and his patience and willingness to listen allayed almost all fears of bias and the participants found him quite acceptable. Even the Deputy Leader of the UUP, John Taylor, who had at the beginning compared his chairmanship to that of an hypothetical American-Serb presiding over talks in Croatia, described Mitchell as an excellent chairman with great ability and tremendous patience and tolerance from the word go.²⁶

We now turn to the question of why mediators get involved in a conflict. Not only must the protagonists find the mediator acceptable, but also the mediator must want to mediate. What motivates a mediator to get involved and how does it affect the negotiations?

Mitchell's Motives

The fact that a mediator wants to participate in negotiations and see a conflict resolved peacefully indicates that he has motives and aspirations. Peter Carnavale and Sharon Arad write:

Benefits to the mediator may be humanitarian or material; they may include a salary for professionals as well as intangible rewards such as prestige, gratitude of the disputants and others from the broader community, a sense of personal satisfaction, reputation benefits that may facilitate a political career, and political and economic influence gained or protected. Costs include expenditure of time and energy, loss of tangible resources, sense of frustration (especially in the event of failure) expenditure of political capital and so on.²⁷

These motives and costs can color the manner in which a mediator goes about his job. If a particular settlement could potentially give him greater benefits than costs, he may steer the negotiations or advocate particular solutions towards that end.

Jacob Bercovitch posits that "the motives for initiating mediation may include; (a) a desire to be instrumental in changing the pattern of a long-standing conflict, (b) a desire to observe, analyze and influence an actual international conflict, (c) a desire to gain access to political leaders, (d) a desire to put into practice a set of ideas on conflict management, and, some might argue, (e) a desire to spread one's ideas and enhance personal standing and professional status.²⁸ I would note that although it is quite possible that some potential mediators aspire to make political hay from mediating, the odds of that type of success would not always be in their favor. For

example, the Vatican mediated the Beagle Channel dispute between Chile and Argentina for six exhausting years before the two sides finally came to an agreement. Mitchell spent two grueling years mediating the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. Many conflicts continue to this day after failed mediation attempts: Cyprus and India-Pakistan. Anyone merely looking to polish up their image or appear the worldly diplomat to the folks back home should think twice about entering the often painfully slow moving and frustrating field of mediation.

I am convinced that the reason Mitchell continued on as chairman during the many times when there seemed to be little hope of progress, was an honest desire to help bring peace to Northern Ireland. During his two years in Northern Ireland, Mitchell had more than his fair share of personal tragedies and events that many people would have used to excuse themselves from the process. His brother, with whom he had a close personal relationship, died of leukemia after months of suffering. Mitchell, at age 61 had recently remarried to a woman in her thirties. His new wife had a miscarriage with her first pregnancy. She became pregnant again, and they went through an anxious and nervous pregnancy and had a baby. Would a man with his accomplishments put himself and his family through the months of separation just for another trophy on the mantle? After serving as Senate Majority leader, I do not believe serving as chairman of these negotiations was an ego trip. There were many other positions back in the U.S. available to him that were more lucrative, prestigious and far less grueling than this one. If he were interested in making money, he picked the wrong position. The pay for this particular job was absolutely zero.

Mitchell tells a story that on the day his son was born he asked his staff to find out how many children had been born in Northern Ireland: 61. He writes:

Heather and I had such high hopes and dreams for our son. Surely the parents of those sixty-one babies had the same hopes and dreams. The aspirations of parents everywhere are the same: for their children to be healthy and happy, safe and secure, to get a good education and a good start in life, and to be able to go as high and as far as talent and willingness to work will take them. Shouldn't those sixty-one children in Northern Ireland have the same chance as our son? Could they get it if Northern Ireland reverted to sectarian strife? There would always be babies being torn from their mother's arms by the sudden blast of a bomb. When a mother sent her children off to school in the morning there would always be the nagging fear of random violence, the chance she may never again see them alive. Why should people live like that? This conflict was made and sustained by men and women. It could be ended by men and women. And I knew those men and women. They were there, in Stormont. I had been with them for a year and a half, and I was now determined to stay with them to the end.²⁹

The participants in the negotiations were aware of each other's personal losses. The other political leaders must have been reassured of Mitchell's commitment to attaining peace when they saw him continue on in the face of these personal situations. This was not his country, but he obviously cared very deeply.

Princen categorizes intermediaries as either neutral or principal mediators. A neutral mediator has no interest in the conflict other than a desire to facilitate an agreement. A principal mediator, on the other hand, has indirect interests in the conflict and often comes to the negotiations with carrots and sticks.³⁰ In negotiations with a principal mediator, the protagonists must concern themselves with the motives of the mediator as well as those of their adversary. The benefit is that the principal mediator can bring incentives to the table. In negotiations with a neutral mediator, the participants can operate in an environment with fewer risks; however when

negotiations reach a sticking point, the neutral mediator may lack the power to advance the process.

Mitchell was clearly a neutral mediator. He came to the negotiations with the moral support of President Clinton, but without any carrots or sticks at all. Much was made about Clinton's eleventh hour phone calls to the party leaders on 10 April 1998. Many in the media wanted to know if he had come 'bearing gifts'. Clinton stated that he did not offer any financial incentives, only encouragement, and insisted that the credit belonged to the political parties and the two leaders, Mr. Blair and Mr. Ahern, and he paid special tribute to Senator George Mitchell's "brilliant and unbelievable patience."³¹ Mitchell's status as a neutral mediator was particularly evident early in the negotiations, when they had reached just such a sticking point and Mitchell considered using a tactic from his days as Senate Majority Leader. Because there had not been any progress in the negotiations, he wanted to threaten the participants with keeping them in session through the August summer holiday period unless they started making some decisions. After consulting with some of the leaders Mitchell decided not to use his threat. As one of them told him, "It may have worked in the Senate but it won't work here. They'll just laugh at you and leave anyway."³²

Although being a neutral mediator limited his ability to dictate what he wanted done, it increased his acceptability as chairman. As addressed in the previous section, since Mitchell lacked carrots, sticks and ulterior motives, the participants could operate in an environment with fewer risks. With such a deep distrust for the other side, even a hint of distrust in the process would surely guarantee failure. Mitchell felt that since the two sides had no trust for each other, they had to be able to trust him.

During initial negotiations over what his role and authority as chairman would be, Mitchell said that he “felt throughout the discussion that ultimately my ability to be effective would depend more upon my gaining the participants’ trust and confidence than on the formal description of my authority.”³³

Although Mitchell lacked carrots and sticks, what he had going for him was the peoples’ desire for peace. Popular support for the negotiations ensured that none of the leaders present wanted to be the one accused of derailing the peace process. That is the factor that kept everyone in the negotiating room month after month in spite of the lack of progress. Young argues that “the interjection of third-party views and evaluations is likely to have a significant effect on the expectations and attitudes of the participants in a crisis concerning the distribution of advantages and the course of the crisis as well as acceptable behavioral patterns. External sanction or disapproval will have an effect, in many cases, on the certainty with which a party holds its position and on its ability to appeal to outside standards for support of its conduct.”³⁴ In this regard, a protagonist does not care if its opponent disapproves of its behavior, however it may care if a respected third party disapproves. In this example the third party is the people of Northern Ireland. The high stakes involved were clear. The *Irish News* described them in an article, under the headline “Bloodshed Looms If Parties Fail to Settle”.³⁵

Roles and Strategies

Once a mediator decides that the time to enter negotiations is right and both sides have found him acceptable, he must decide what his role will be and how he will conduct the negotiations. Mediation strategies can cover a wide range, from offering

one's "good offices" to constructing and advocating particular settlements. The mediator's role can, and in fact should, evolve during the process as well. At some points during negotiations, allowing face-to-face interaction may prove helpful. At other times, a mediator may find himself acting as simple courier, conveying messages between the two camps. The mediator's power and resources and the nature of the conflict dictate the role the mediator should assume.

Just like in acceptability for entrance, either side can veto, or demand a change to the role of the mediator at any time. Princen argues that the role of the intermediary constantly fluctuates, but is fundamentally dependent upon the stage of the conflict, the nature of the intervention and the disputants' interests in the process. He argues that to the extent the dispute has escalated, interactions are intense, and disputants are fixed on positions or resist creative solutions, the disputant may want to grant the intermediary considerable control. If on the other hand, all the ingredients for agreement are in place and only a neutral location with some process facilitation needed, then the disputants would want to grant only limited control.³⁶ The Northern Ireland situation clearly is one of the former types. Interactions are intense and positions fixed. Initially, perhaps out of wariness, Mitchell did not have extensive control. As we will see, his role evolved.

Certain individuals lend themselves to certain mediation roles. Traditionally the Quakers, when operating as mediators, have quietly conveyed messages back and forth between the contentious sides. Their lack of selfish motivations or carrots and sticks makes them well suited for this type role. They have at times declined to deliver particularly inflammatory and self-serving messages, but have otherwise not

gotten involved in the negotiations beyond serving as a communications channel. Henry Kissinger, on the other hand, could hardly be considered a simple postman. As one of the most powerfully influential statesmen in modern history, with the full power of the United States behind him, his role as a mediator in the Middle East was destined to fall much further towards the opposite end of the spectrum, where the mediator advocates and advances particular solutions that fit his agenda.

Although he was a powerful American politician, in this environment Mitchell, as previously argued, was a neutral mediator. Accordingly, his style more often leaned towards that of the Quakers than Kissinger. He would play the role of a courier, going back and forth between the various parties, getting input, suggestions and reactions. Because Mitchell did not have the power to impose a solution, he adapted his style and focused on becoming a consensus builder.

Bercovitch argues that we must look beyond simply classifying the mediator's role on a spectrum running from passive to active, but realize that the role evolves. More important than roles are the strategies the mediator employs. Bercovitch advocates the use of Touval and Zartman's framework of mediation strategies:

(1) Communication-facilitation, -make contact with parties, gain trust and confidence, arrange for interactions, identify issues and interests, clarify the situation, avoid taking sides, develop a rapport, supply missing information, develop a framework for understanding, encourage meaningful communication, offer positive evaluations, allow the interests of all parties to be discussed

(2) Formulation, -choose meeting site, control pace and formality of meetings, control physical environment, establish protocol, suggest procedures, highlight common interests, reduce tensions, control timing, deal with simple issues first, structure agenda, keep parties at the table, help parties save face, keep process focused on the issues

(3) Manipulation, -change parties' expectations, take responsibility for concessions, make substantive suggestions for proposals, make parties aware of costs of non-agreement, supply and filter information, suggest concessions parties can make, help negotiators undo a commitment, reward concessions, help devise a framework for acceptable outcome, change expectations, press the parties to show flexibility, promise resources or threaten withdrawal, offer to verify compliance with agreement³⁷

One can see pieces from each of Touval and Zartman's strategies overlapping in Mitchell's performance. As Mitchell established himself as chairman, the preponderance of his tactics shifted from communication to formulation and then to manipulation strategy. Initially Mitchell operated primarily within the communication strategy. He made it a point to frequently meet face to face with the leaders of the various parties so as to develop rapport and encourage communication. As previously addressed he also worked hard to gain trust and confidence and establish himself as impartial by acting evenhandedly and patiently listening to all sides of the story. Because of his previous experience with the commerce conference and the decommissioning board, he was also able to demonstrate a solid knowledge of the conflict. His use of the "Mitchell Principals" is a good example of Mitchell identifying issues and interests. Mitchell made a point of requiring the leaders of each party to stand up and swear to uphold the Mitchell Principals. That is, to:

- (a) utilize democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;
- (b) agree to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations;
- (c) agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;
- (d) renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;

- (e) agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and
- (f) urge that "punishment" killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.³⁸

By making this very public vow a prerequisite to participation in the negotiations, Mitchell placed an important deterrent on the participants who might consider resorting to violence. The reason most treaties are signed in public ceremonies is to reinforce their legitimacy and shore up the level of commitment of the signatories. If a signatory betrays the agreement later on, everyone will know that he went back on his word. The requirement to agree to the Mitchell principals also served the purpose of establishing a small piece of common ground to build further agreement upon. The peace agreement had to begin somewhere, and the mutual agreement to use peaceful, democratic tactics was a start.

After Mitchell established himself, he was able to use more of a formulation strategy. He did utilize control of the physical environment and changes in meeting sites as a tactic to facilitate the negotiations. Mitchell quickly realized that full meetings with all parties present usually became contentious, as orators from both sides would use the platform to dredge up old and new wrongs and restate their often told version of the conflict. Mitchell decided instead to allow each party to meet in its own room and he would move from room to room, meeting individually with the party's leadership. Considering the deep-seated animosities and the closed lines of communication, this was an excellent tactic to get the parties to focus on moving

forward instead of posturing for the 'enemy' and concentrating on the past. Scholars agree that it is also easier for a party leader to agree to a proposal brought to him by Mitchell, a neutral third party, than to agree to one put forward by the hated and distrusted opposition. Mitchell also found that meetings with microphones, note-takers, assistants and aides present tended to discourage the candid exchange of views and hard bargaining needed for progress. He moved some of the meetings to a smaller room with no note-takers or microphones, and just the primary and deputy participants included.³⁹ These actions greatly facilitated Mitchell's efforts towards reducing tension in the negotiations and allowed the participants to focus on moving forward.

Mitchell also used a formulation strategy by establishing a protocol, dealing with simple issues first and constructing an agenda. As mentioned, he established a common ground by making the Mitchell Principles the basis for the negotiations. Progress was painfully slow and very frustrating as it took months for the parties to accept the basic agenda for the negotiations. Mitchell started as chairman in June 1996 and the basic agenda wasn't agreed to until October 1996. It was during this trying period, when the parties were sizing him up, that Mitchell worked on establishing his impartiality and trustworthiness by listening to all sides patiently, not trying to forge ahead before the parties were ready, and most of all, sticking with the process although there was no progress.

Mitchell worked hard to keep all of the parties at the negotiating table and to allow them to save face. He would seek out the leaders personally and encourage them to stay involved. Mitchell even met with Paisley and encouraged him to continue on, and this was after Paisley had taken to calling the peace process a

“complete charade”, and criticizing Mitchell directly by calling him the “Pope”, among other things, in the media.⁴⁰

Both sides used the media extensively to point fingers and lay blame for the failure to progress. Leaks to the press were a fact of life. Through all this, Mitchell kept in mind that although it may be unflattering, if he took responsibility for failures, the leaders were shielded and could continue negotiating. Mitchell regularly argued that it was the leadership in Northern Ireland who were summoning great courage and taking the political risks to attain peace. He was willing to take the heat if it meant that the process could continue. The British leadership encouraged Mitchell to put on a happy face with the media regardless of what was going on in the negotiations and Mitchell complied. At times Mitchell’s cheerleading became a bit transparent, but Mitchell always tried to put a positive spin on the situation. The fact that he would not pass the buck of responsibility reinforced the growing esteem that the party leaders had for him.

After Mitchell had established himself as chairman and the parties finally agreed to a basic agenda and protocol, he was able to shift into what Touval and Zartman call manipulation strategy. Mitchell used the tactic of having the parties draft up and submit their positions on various issues. He would then go from party to party looking for room to compromise, encouraging flexibility, clarifying and filtering information and making suggestions. Consensus building was a difficult task in this environment. After Paisley and McCartney walked out, there were still eight political parties involved. Each decision did not have to be unanimous, but it still made crafting an acceptable agreement difficult. Beyond simply agreeing on the intent of

the agreement, Mitchell would spend many hours on refining the semantics of a particular section of the agreement so that it would be acceptable to all.

One of the last tactics mentioned under this strategy is for the mediator to threaten to withdraw. Mitchell never threatened to quit as chairman, but what he did was establish a deadline for an agreement. After almost two years of negotiating, Mitchell came to the realization that these parties could continue haggling indefinitely without coming to an agreement. The danger with this was that the paramilitaries and extremists would not continue to maintain their tenuous cease-fire and the peace process might come undone if they didn't conclude an agreement. They did not have the luxury of time to continue rehashing the same issues over and over. At various times during the negotiations, extremists had committed terrorist acts and the process had been stalled as the parties took to pointing fingers, affixing blame and demanding the ouster of the party in question. Many of the smaller parties are linked to paramilitary organizations. Sinn Fein is linked to the IRA by everyone but themselves. Once again, Mitchell used the fact that nobody wanted to be blamed for the failure of the peace process, to push the parties towards concluding an agreement by Good Friday 1998. Mitchell writes:

Merely continuing the talks had become an important objective. There was broad consensus that if they ended without an agreement there would be an immediate resumption of sectarian violence, possibly on a scale more deadly than ever before; the loyalist parties repeatedly made this point with emphasis...So, in effect, the participants in the negotiations believed that they had to keep talking.⁴¹

Each of these mediation strategies is designed to change, affect or modify aspects of the dispute, or the nature of interaction between the parties. Which strategy

a mediator opts for is dictated by two overwhelming factors: the nature of the dispute and his resources and interests. Bercovitch cites the six bases of power from French and Raven's conceptualization of social influence as the types of resources a mediator may have available: reward, coercion, referent, legitimacy, expertise and information. Reward and coercion are the carrot and the stick, while referent is a sense of mutual identity between mediator and protagonist. Legitimacy is the right or obligation to mediate, by virtue of the mediator's position or title, while expertise is based upon one's knowledge and ability. Lastly, informational resources allow the mediator to uncover and transmit information that may change the aspects of the dispute.⁴² Of these, Mitchell had expertise and informational resources going for him, but he had to convince the participants that this was true. His experiences as Senate Majority leader and with the commerce conference and decommissioning body served him well. He understood how to manage negotiations and he understood the details of this particular conflict.

Young names the following actions and tactics available to a third party to a dispute: persuasion, enunciation, elaboration and initiation, interpretation and participation.⁴³ This framework, though less detailed, overlays nicely on Touval and Zartman's strategies. As with Touval and Zartman's framework, Mitchell's actions fit well within this one as well.

Persuasion is the process through which parties become aware of common interests and ways of capitalizing on them through contact with the third party. Mitchell's focus on the goal of peace and not on contentious bickering was an example of persuasion. His words and, more importantly, his example helped to persuade the

negotiators. He never placed the blame on others. He patiently listened to everyone's side of the story. He encouraged civility. He established common ground with the Mitchell Principles and defused the hostility by putting the parties in separate rooms.

Enunciation refers to setting forth of clear-cut statements on the part of the third party, laying out its understanding of the issues involved and suggesting basic principles, procedures or mechanisms through the use of which a solution or termination of the crisis might be achieved. Mitchell's persuasive actions are also examples of how he enunciated basic principles and areas of commonality. Although the leaders from the two sides did not trust each other, they all wanted to work for peace. Mitchell allowed them to focus on peace instead of on each other. His experience as Senate Majority leader and knowledge of legal procedure also helped him craft the ground rules and agendas in ways that were fair and appropriate.

Elaboration and initiation involves the third party taking an active part in discussing and formulating the common interests of the parties and interjecting substantive proposals for termination or settlement, which neither of the protagonists would feel prepared to do on its own initiative. Mitchell elaborated on and initiated proposals and recommendations for ways to come to agreement. He repeatedly made the rounds to each of the leaders, searching for room to compromise. Young notes that it is extremely important for the mediator to be well informed of all aspects of the dispute to successfully execute this strategy.

Interpretation involves the mediator clarifying factual situations by removing distortion and ambiguity. Mitchell interpreted the parties' positions, refined their

proposals and made suggestions on how they could move forward. In doing so, he also served as a buffer to clarify and soften the communication between the parties.

Young calls participation direct, three-cornered diplomacy, rather than behind-the-scenes persuasion. Thus, the mediator's role can "range from conciliation through mediation to the generation and application of various types of pressure." Mitchell shrewdly used both direct and behind-the-scenes approaches, depending on the situation. At times, due to the Protestants' unwillingness to speak directly with the leaders of Sinn Fein, direct diplomacy was not an option.

Young argues further that a third party should be independent. That is, he must be free from attachment to a political entity that has a stake in the outcome. He must occupy a position of salience in the eyes of the two parties in the crisis, both as a natural actor toward which to turn and as a source of useful assistance. Additionally, the third party requires a high degree of prestige or repute. It is also preferred that a third party has continuity. The parties are better served if they believe that a mediator will be available in the future. Lastly, a mediator needs to have a strong background knowledge of the dispute, a wealth of negotiating skill and the ability and willingness to take the initiative.⁴⁴

Mitchell is a prestigious, respected and powerful American leader. His willingness to accept responsibility for failure established him as someone the leaders could turn to without fear of being blamed for failure. His comments and actions demonstrated a keen understanding of the dispute. When the participants saw him return after the death of his brother and his wife's miscarriage, they knew he was in

for the long haul. His experience in the Senate and with the decommissioning body demonstrated his negotiating skills.

Obstacles and Tactics

As previously alluded to, conflict negotiations often drag out much longer than anyone would have ever expected at the outset. It is in these contentious and seemingly intractable situations that a mediator truly earns his keep. Those situations that merely require good offices and some cups of coffee so that the two sides can sit down and hammer out their differences rarely warrant praise and admiration of the mediator involved. It is those situations where many pessimists predict failure and perhaps others have failed before that a mediator's job is most pivotal. The peaceful solution is present somewhere and he must help the two sides find it. To warrant the accolades for a job well done a mediator may have to withstand large amounts of frustration and seemingly unending and exhausting negotiations. Mitchell's performance in Northern Ireland definitely meets this requirement. Others had failed in the past and the task took a grueling two years to accomplish.

Susskind and Babbitt write that there are three obstacles to successful mediation: those associated with one party, those associated with the relationship between the disputants, and those associated with the mediation effort itself. A mediator must alter the manner in which the two parties assess the costs and benefits of continuing the conflict and change the way the conflict is managed.⁴⁵

Examples of obstacles associated with one party include the staking out of extreme positions, the miscalculation of external support, domestic pressure against negotiations, internal divisions and an overestimation of one's ability to wait out an

opponent. There was clearly a split in the loyalist camp when Paisley walked out of the negotiations. He continually criticized David Trimble for supporting the negotiations and for "selling out" unionist positions. Mitchell has acknowledged that perhaps Paisley's departure actually made getting an agreement easier. He also tells a story of a protest rally against the negotiations lead by Paisley that failed to attract more than a couple hundred people. In the past there would have been thousands. Paisley's extremist views and unwillingness to compromise or change had caused him to be left behind. Paisley miscalculated his support.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Trimble couldn't ignore Paisley completely, and some of the more extreme members of the unionist movement would, at times, influence his negotiating stance.

Susskind and Babbitt posit that a third party can: provide a dispassionate calculation (a reality check) of a party's options, threaten to impose or increase economic or political costs, help coalesce national support for a leader willing to try mediation, include all parties in negotiations, and lastly, attempt to reframe the dialogue and identify "small moves" to ease the conflict by using informal, 'track two' meetings that shift the relationship from adversarial to problem solving.⁴⁷ Mitchell did as Susskind and Babbitt proposed. He personally encouraged Trimble and supported him in the media. Mitchell also focused on and recommended the "small moves" needed to reach an agreement.

Princen writes that for the principal mediator, the target of intervention is payoff structure and the objective is to enhance incentives for agreement. For the neutral mediator, the target is the mode of interaction and the objective is to create

realistic empathy. The three forms of impediment to effective negotiating are insufficient incentives, psychological bias and conflictual forms of interaction.⁴⁸

In the case of insufficient incentives, the principal mediator can make agreement attractive by expanding the pie, establish a deadline so the parties are less likely to wait it out for a 'better' outcome, and he can offer insurance plans and security guarantees to reduce risk. Mitchell was not in a position to offer any of this. In the case of psychological bias, cognitive limitations and misperceptions play a large influence. A mediator can position himself to collect and process information from both sides and make a dispassionate and comprehensive analysis that corrects each party's errors. Both neutral and principal mediators can fill this role, but it is important that both be well informed and knowledgeable of the nuances and history of the conflict.⁴⁹ Mitchell did just this when he moved from room to room, party to party, collecting proposals and making counter proposals on each matter of contention.

Lastly, in the case of conflictual norms of interaction Princen quotes Herbert Kelman, who writes:

it is often that the norms that govern interactions between the representatives of conflicting parties require each to express their own grievances and to proclaim their own rights as firmly and militantly as possible. If the adversary describes atrocities in which hundreds were killed, they must counter with atrocities in which thousands were killed. If the adversary cites historical claims, which go back a hundred years, they must counter with claims that go back a thousand years... The representatives of conflicting parties engaged in such interactions are judged by their constituencies-and indeed judge themselves-by how well they have been able to advance and defend their positions and how strong a case they have presented. They focus only on what they themselves have to say, not on what the other has to say. There is little attempt to gain understanding of the other's perspective except perhaps in the crudest strategic terms. Nor are they particularly interested in influencing their adversary; their communications are directed to their own constituencies and to third parties.⁵⁰

Princen argues that a principal mediator can reverse these norms of interaction only if he himself does not operate under them. He must demonstrate effectiveness, show progress, show that the parties are following his lead and show that his concept of historical and legal rights are adhered to. Most importantly, he must show that his interests are being served. The neutral mediator, on the other hand, has no constituency to answer to and therefore, no need to appear 'tough'. The neutral's task is to improve communication and enhance the understanding of each party's intentions and perceptions (realistic empathy).⁵¹ Mitchell filled this role nicely. Because he did not have to appear 'tough' or answer to a constituency, he was able to take responsibility for failure or lack of progress, with the media. He acknowledged the pain and suffering of both sides, but rather than focusing blame, he instead focused on the future and everyone's desire that the violence and terror stop. This effort facilitated a sense of commonality; everyone wanted peace.

Unfortunately, Mitchell found himself acknowledging the suffering of both sides a bit too often for the good of the negotiations. Frequently Mitchell had to make statements condemning the many terrorist acts that occurred during the negotiations. By condemning violence regardless of its source, Mitchell further established his impartiality. A typical Mitchell statement following a bombing was "we strongly and unequivocally condemn today's bombing... We believe that the way to peace is not through violence, but rather through meaningful dialogue."⁵²

Young lists his positive and independent actions for a third party mediator as communication and contact, data collection and processing and interposition. These

activities may either modify the perceptions, perspectives and behavior patterns of one or both sides to the point where a nonviolent termination can be reached or they may keep the two sides physically or mentally separated to a sufficient degree to avoid or mitigate open clashes. Mitchell did just this when he stopped holding full meetings and moved to smaller, leaders only meetings, and individual party meetings. During one of the more contentious meetings, Mitchell "told them that I was familiar with the tactic of demonizing one's enemy, having seen it work in my own country in time of war. This process, however, was not about making war, but about ending war and establishing peace, political stability, and reconciliation. The more inflammatory the rhetoric, the more difficult the process would be. I urged them to be restrained outside of the talks and courteous inside. If they were, then perhaps we could reach agreement."⁵³

Young writes that a mediator must address problems involving misperceptions and distortions of opponent's motives and intentions; assessments of the course of hostilities and damage sustained; assessments and estimates of remaining military strength on each side; perceptions of the causes of a crisis or conflict, and misperceptions and ignorance of an opponents military strength or actions.⁵⁴ Much like the other scholars, Young is arguing that a third party must act as a filter or honest broker that eliminates distortion and misperception and provides both sides with accurate information on the actual situation and on the opponent's actions and intentions. When Mitchell visited the Chief Constable of the RUC and tried to determine if Gerry Adams had the power to restrain the IRA, he was performing just

such a task. He moved past the rhetoric and inflexible positions and sought to find out the reality of the situation.

Louis Kriesberg writes that the primary mediating activity in negotiations is to make the adversaries' negotiations more acceptable. This includes giving legitimacy to offers and to options for settlement. A proposal made by one of the adversaries may be easier to accept if it is presented by a mediator. Mediating activity also includes managing relations with the parties who are not directly involved in the negotiations. Mediation services may include seeking to win support for the settlement from the parties' constituencies, by staging traditional and symbolic rituals that make the agreement more visible and obligatory and hence improves the likelihood of compliance.⁵⁵ As previously mentioned with regard to the Mitchell Principles, typically when leaders of two countries sign a treaty, they do so in public at a ceremony. This serves the purpose of reminding those who would renege on the deal that their constituencies and the world saw them make a promise and now sees that their honor is suspect or worthless. Mitchell's habit of giving praise to those taking the political risks by negotiating also helped reinforce the positive public opinion and support most Northern Irish had for the process.

One of the tactics mediators have used to increase the likelihood of success has been to negotiate in isolation. As Kelman argues, because the parties are concerned with the image they project to their constituencies, they often use harsh inflammatory rhetoric to please the folks back home. Some mediators have insisted that there be no contact with the media to eliminate this counterproductive gamesmanship. In the case where the negotiations cannot or will not be conducted under a media blackout,

mediators have at times resorted to using the media and public opinion as a 'stick' with which to threaten parties that will not cooperate. A mediator might let the media know that the fault for the deadlock is that of a particular party. The media and public opinion play a huge role in negotiations and mediation. A shrewd mediator recognizes this and takes actions to use it to his advantage or eliminate it as an inflammatory factor.

As a neutral mediator, Mitchell did not have the power to invoke a media blackout. He did not use the media as a stick to affix blame either, although the possibility to do so was always there. He did often beseech the party leaders to tone down their rhetoric inside the meetings and outside with the media, often to little or no avail. The media covering the negotiations were well informed and aware of the issues. As mentioned, Mitchell's positive spin during times of little progress was often identified for what it was, spin. Because of easy access and constant leaks, the media often knew the real situation and where the fault lay. All the party leaders played the propaganda game with the media so that they would sound good to their constituents, but underneath they also knew that failure was unacceptable.

Another tactic that many mediators use is that of setting deadlines. Often negotiations that are stalled will re-energize under the pressure of a deadline. The result of passing the deadline may be the resignation or withdrawal of the mediator, or the blame for failure in the media, in front of one's constituency. As mentioned above, constituencies can send mixed messages; fix the problem and fix it on our terms. Leaders do not want to be blamed for not fixing the problem any more than they want to be blamed for 'giving away the store'. Mediators will often set the

deadline to a tangible and meaningful date. Religious holidays are often used as they have significant connections to the ideals of peace and love of fellow man. Mitchell did just this when he made Good Friday the deadline for an agreement.

Conclusion

The job of mediating conflicts is one of the most difficult tasks man faces. If the solution were simple, the contentious parties would not need a mediator. In this chapter I have addressed the perspectives of various scholars on some of the most significant topics and issues involved in international mediation. Much like the many theories and ideas involving international relations that do not apply to every situation and circumstance, there is no transportable template of international mediation. I will, however, venture to argue that there are some rules of thumb.

Mediation is affected by the nature of the conflict, the relationship between the parties themselves and the relationship between the parties and the mediator. A mediator may not be able to enter a negotiation at the time of his choosing. The parties involved and the circumstances of the conflict may dictate his entrance. The mediator should realize that the conditions under which he is operating vary depending upon the stage of the conflict's life cycle. Mitchell's entrance was late in Northern Ireland's conflict cycle when the conflict was ripe for the vast majority of Northern Irish. Paisley, McCartney and their parties were the exceptions. As a result, the two sides were deeply split and the lines on communication were closed. On the other hand, they were ready to negotiate. They wanted to find another way to move forward, without the violence.

A mediator must indeed be acceptable to both parties. Impartiality, in the sense of trustworthiness, is important. Suspicion will doom a negotiation. Mitchell overcame the initial concerns with extreme patience and evenhandedness.

A mediator must be skillful and flexible enough to apply various strategies at different times in the negotiations. He must know when it is appropriate to simply play the role of courier or when to weigh in and advocate particular settlement options. He should have the intuition for when face-to-face meetings will advance 'realistic empathy' or when they will harden extremist positions. Mitchell used the style and location of meetings to his full advantage. By negotiating and meeting separately, he defused much of the animosity. By moving the primary leaders to a smaller room without all the additional personnel and note-takers, he facilitated a focus on problem solving.

A mediator must have a solid working knowledge of all positions in the case at hand. Semantics and nuances often mean the difference between a settlement and stalemate. A mediator must have endurance and patience. Especially when the media and constituents have access to the negotiations, a mediator may have to wade through seemingly unending speech making, finger pointing, pontification and rabble rousing. Mitchell had the advantage of his prior experiences in the Senate and Northern Ireland to build his experience and knowledge base. His patience was perhaps his most important characteristic and is the one most of the other participants mention when complimenting him. Mitchell's ability to continue as chairman for over two years, listening to the same speeches, and seeing little hope for progress is nothing less than exceptional. I'm convinced that most of us with a lesser reservoir of patience would

have quit long ago, especially given the personal tragedies Mitchell faced during his tenure.

Finally, a mediator must know when to pull the plug. Some mediators in long-running negotiations set deadlines. Others threaten to quit. Basketball announcers talk about players who really know how to "finish", meaning that they not only have the moves, but can also put the ball in the hoop. A good mediator must also know how to finish. Mitchell set the deadline for Good Friday and was indeed able to finish.

Notes

Chapter 2

¹ George Mitchell, *Making Peace*, (Alfred Knopf, 1999), p 53.

² Mitchell, p56.

³ Mitchell, p84.

⁴ Mitchell, p87.

⁵ Mitchell, p121.

⁶ Mitchell, p 110.

⁷ "Out of Touch with Electorate", *Ireland Today*, 7 August 1999

⁸ Mitchell, p 103.

⁹ Mitchell, p 117.

¹⁰ Lawrence Susskind and Eileen Babbitt, "Overcoming the Obstacles to Effective Mediation of International Disputes" in *Mediation in International Relations*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, (St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 31-32.

¹¹ Mitchell, p 188.

¹² Mitchell, p 174-175.

¹³ Oran Young, *The Intermediaries*, (Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 20.

¹⁴ Mitchell, p174.

¹⁵ Thomas Princen, *Intermediaries in International Conflict*, (Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 51.

¹⁶ Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, "The Study of International Mediation" in *Resolving International Conflicts*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch, (Lynne Reinner, 1996), p. 23-24.

¹⁷ Mitchell, p 137.

¹⁸ Young, p. 81-82.

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- ¹⁹ Princen, p. 62.
- ²⁰ Mitchell, p 50.
- ²¹ "Revealed: the 'Irish-American' senator who is as Irish as a stuffed vine leaf" *The Independent* (London) 17 June, 1996.
- ²² Mitchell, p 47.
- ²³ Mitchell, p 54.
- ²⁴ James Jonah, "The UN and International Conflict", in *Mediation in International Relations*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, (St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 199.
- ²⁵ Mitchell, p 86.
- ²⁶ Mitchell, p 69.
- ²⁷ Peter Carnavale and Sharon Arad, "Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation" in *Resolving International Conflicts*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Lynne Reinner, 1996), p. 40.
- ²⁸ Jacob Bercovitch, "The Structure and Diversity of Mediation in International Relations" in *Mediation in International Relations*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, (St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 8.
- ²⁹ Mitchell, p 122.
- ³⁰ Princen, p. 20.
- ³¹ "The Northern Ireland Settlement", *Irish Times*, 11 April 1998, p. 59.
- ³² Mitchell, p 61.
- ³³ Mitchell, p 57.
- ³⁴ Young, p. 37.
- ³⁵ Mitchell, p 146.
- ³⁶ Princen, p. 65.
- ³⁷ Jacob Bercovitch, "The Structure and Diversity of Mediation in International Relations" in *Mediation in International Relations*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, (St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 16-18.

³⁸ Mitchell, p35-36.

³⁹ Mitchell, p 123-124.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, p 54.

⁴¹ Mitchell, p 110.

⁴² Jacob Bercovitch, "The Structure and Diversity of Mediation in International Relations" in *Mediation in International Relations*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, (St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 20-21.

⁴³ Young, p. 51-59.

⁴⁴ Young, p. 82-89.

⁴⁵ Susskind and Babbitt, p. 39-43.

⁴⁶ Mitchell, p 177.

⁴⁷ Susskind and Babbitt, p. 43-45.

⁴⁸ Princen, p. 27.

⁴⁹ Princen, p. 28.

⁵⁰ Princen, p. 28.

⁵¹ Princen, p. 27-29.

⁵² Mitchell, p 55.

⁵³ Mitchell, p 121.

⁵⁴ Young, p. 63-64.

⁵⁵ Louis Kriesberg, "Varieties of Mediating Activities and Mediators in International Relations" in *Resolving International Conflicts*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch, (Lynne Reinner, 1996), p. 229-230.

Chapter 3

Mitchell's Performance According to the Participants and Observers

My original question was: To what extent do the international actions of private mediation by former United States Senator George Mitchell bear responsibility for the fruits of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the general peace process in Northern Ireland? In chapter 1, I found, using Deutsch's integration theory, no indications that the Catholics and Protestants of Northern Ireland had integrated-- that is, that they had dropped violence as a viable course of action for solving conflicts. This led me to believe that the negotiations were instrumental in achieving a peace agreement. In chapter 2, I established that Mitchell's behavior and actions during the negotiations fell within the realm of recommended and acceptable strategies and tactics, according to mediation theory. Given the results of these two chapters, I can now say with a fair amount of certainty that the success of the Good Friday Agreement did stem from the negotiations and Mitchell did very well as the chairman. To analyze how well he did, I will now analyze the comments and evaluations of Mitchell made by the participants and observers of the negotiations.

I will look in three areas to gain an appreciation for how the participants and observers felt about Mitchell's performance. First I will look at the statements made by the various participants and observers of the negotiations. Second, I will look at the honors and awards bestowed upon Mitchell following the signing of the

agreement. Finally, I will look at the contemporary situation in which Mitchell has been called back to try to resolve the current impasse over implementing the Good Friday Agreement.

How Mitchell Measures Up in the Eyes of Others

It can be difficult, at times, to distinguish between heartfelt and merely polite compliments. One indicator of sincerity is consistency in the type of praise. Another indicator of sincerity is that similar praise will come from diverse sources. For example, virtually every account of Mitchell's performance mentions his patience. If only one person mentioned a particular characteristic, one may not be convinced that it is representative. When everyone mentions it, one can be fairly well assured that the attribute is accurate and appropriate. Leaders from all corners have lauded Mitchell for his work as chairman of the negotiations. The vast majority of Protestant, Catholic, British and Irish political leaders and observers sing his praises. This was not always the case, as some of the Protestant leaders were quite critical of him initially. The praise is not universal however, as a few, such as Paisley, continue to criticize Mitchell and his efforts to this day. I now turn to each of the groups to give a representative sample of their esteem for Mitchell.

Initially, the Protestants were quite leery of Mitchell. The fact that he was Catholic immediately made him suspect in their eyes. His political ties with Irish-Catholic politicians, like Senator Ted Kennedy, also raised concerns. Deputy Leader of the UUP, John Taylor, said that putting Mitchell in charge of the talks "was the equivalent of appointing an American Serb to preside over talks on the future of Croatia...[it] is a non-runner."¹ In the end, most Protestants, with the exception of

Paisley, became quite complimentary of Mitchell. Mitchell writes that after two months he felt a growing acceptance by the participants. Taylor changed his tune significantly, describing Mitchell as an excellent chairman that "has shown great ability and tremendous patience and tolerance from the word go."²

David Trimble, leader of the largest Protestant party, the UUP, also became an admirer of Mitchell. Trimble, as well as the other participants in the negotiations, gave numerous interviews and public addresses after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Most were guardedly optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland. They typically would offer hopeful predictions, while stating that the other side needed to compromise more. The one commonality in their comments was their praise for Mitchell. On 7 December 1998, Trimble gave a typical interview to the National Press Club, in which he again, praised Mitchell, saying, "...under the chairmanship of Senator George Mitchell, who once again I want his contribution to all of this I want to acknowledge. I don't know that anybody else could display George's patience and continued to show his fairness and evenhandedness approach and his consistent encouragement to all the participants in that process. We very much enjoyed working with him."³ I would like to highlight that in his remarks, Trimble not only mentioned Mitchell's patience and fairness, but also said that he did not know that anybody else could have displayed such characteristics under those conditions.

John Hume, leader of the SDLP and Trimble's moderate counterpart on the Catholic side, was equally generous in his praise of Mitchell. In an interview on CNN, 10 April 1998, the day the Good Friday Agreement was signed, Hume addressed Mitchell's contribution when he said, "...and of course we're very grateful

to Senator George Mitchell, who is chairing our talks process and for his enormous patience, dedication and commitment.”⁴ During the closing session of the negotiations, Hume mentioned that “we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Senator Mitchell.”⁵ One of Hume’s deputies in the SDLP, Sean Farren, spoke of Mitchell’s abilities as a conciliator, saying that he was “probably the person best placed to encourage and grow confidence and trust.”⁶

The British and Irish Prime Ministers were also very complimentary of Mitchell’s performance. At the closing session of the negotiations, Taoiseach Ahern was passing out general thanks to all the various people who had participated in the process, when he said “...but it would be wrong not to single out the outstanding chairman, George Mitchell, whose patience and resourcefulness appeared to have known no bounds over the past two years.” It is noteworthy that with all the great things the many people had done to make the process come together, he chose to single out Mitchell’s contribution, in particular. Blair also singled out Mitchell and alluded to his patience saying “...offer my thanks, first of all, to all those who participated in this process, to the infinite patience and kindness of Senator Mitchell, the chairman.”⁷

Two leaders, whose parties are associated with paramilitary organizations on opposite sides of the conflict, Gerry Adams, of Sinn Fein, and Gary McMichael of the Protestant UDP were also complimentary of Mitchell. In a 29 May 1998 interview with the National Press Club, a reporter noted that Adams had not mentioned anything about the role that George Mitchell played. He asked Adams “was it crucial, or was he just sort of a side?” Adams replied:

Senator Mitchell played a crucial role. He brought into this process his experience. I think he brought a sense of humour, patience and I can only say a commitment, because he flew back and forth across the Atlantic like a yo-yo and at times sat for really painstakingly tedious weekends and other periods where there was no movement whatsoever. If you remember when he went there first of all, the Unionists refused to accept him as the chairperson and he was quarantined off into a little room and had to sit for days until this issue was resolved. That's why I think he brought a sense of humanity into it all, both in terms of his own persona and of the sense of the future, which, in my opinion, he represented. And I think all of the parties would agree—if they agree on nothing else, before Good Friday would have agreed that George Mitchell was a remarkable chairperson.⁸

Adams alludes to the fact that Mitchell tolerated the affront because he believed that peace was more important than his own ego. On the Protestant side, McMichael said “I think that the contribution that the three chairmen (Mitchell, de Chastelain, and Holkerri) have made to the process over the last two years has been remarkable, and their fortitude and patience is something which, again, must be applauded.”⁹ As were the cases with Trimble and Hume, and Blair and Ahern, these two represent opposite poles in the Northern Ireland situation, but their praise for Mitchell is strikingly similar.

Outside observers from Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland were equally, if not more, complimentary of Mitchell's performance. Leo McKinstrey of London's *Daily Mail* addressed how essential Mitchell's contribution was when he wrote “without Mitchell's good humour, insight and patience the negotiations would undoubtedly have foundered.”¹⁰ Another British source, *The Economist*, had a 21 March 1998 article that stated, “for the past two weary and mostly unprofitable years, Mr. Mitchell has been the talk's chief chairman, winning general appreciation for patience and tireless courtesy. Originally wary Unionists have become convinced of

Mr. Mitchell's impartiality and in the process lost much of their suspicion of American involvement."¹¹ Dublin and Belfast's *Irish Times* also praised Mitchell, writing "Senator Mitchell has shown almost saintly patience in his endeavors to keep a coherent frame around the process."¹² Finally, Michael Kelly, guest editorialist in *The Washington Post*, summed up the general consensus when he wrote that "After the agreement was signed on Friday, everyone involved said the same thing: It couldn't have happened without Mitchell, and without Mitchell's immense patience in dealing with what must have been one of the more exasperating sets of negotiators ever assembled."¹³

In summary, virtually all participants and observers praised Mitchell's performance as chairman, citing his patience in particular. They singled him out from all of the others, for specific praise, and some went so far as to say that the negotiations would not have succeeded without him. The comments were consistent and came from all corners.

Awards and Honors

Awards and honors given at the end of a term of service have become perfunctory in many circles. In the Army, soldiers receive an award at the end of every tour of duty, with their rank being more influential than their performance in determining the type of award they receive. In all sectors of society it has become the norm to say nice things about those moving on or retiring. If you are not a member of the community giving the honor and do not know the individuals involved, it can be difficult to find a true indication of the honoree's performance amongst all the flowery language. Often times, one must distinguish between subtle semantics to understand

the true measure of performance. For example, an Army officer's career is doomed by an evaluation that says he is a 'good' officer. Inflated evaluations dictate that nothing less than 'excellent' or 'superior' will allow one to move up to the next rank along with the other 60-80% of the officers who were tagged as excellent and superior. It is our nature to speak kindly of others. When was that last time you heard at a retirement ceremony, "Bob was a mediocre worker who punched the clock for thirty years, and we wish him the best in his retirement?"

So how do we recognize truly superior service and performance? Sometimes it is in the nuance of the wording of an award or commendation. Other times, it comes by preserving a few awards for the truly deserving. Lastly, it can come by the sheer array and number of honors bestowed. In the two years after the conclusion of the negotiations, the leaders, governments and most importantly, the Irish people honored Mitchell many times over, with truly prestigious awards. Their expressed gratitude was no mere lip service.

Blair and the other leaders of the British government thought very highly of Mitchell and the work he performed as chairman. Each year, the British Prime Minister forwards a list to the Queen of England of those individuals he would like her to honor. This list of "New Years honours" specifies the level of award the Prime Minister recommends. In 1998 Tony Blair recommended that Mitchell receive a knighthood. On 15 July 1999 the Queen of England bestowed the Grand Knight Cross of the Order of the British Empire upon Mitchell. This knighthood is the highest honor a foreign national can receive in Great Britain.

The leadership of the Republic of Ireland was equally grateful and impressed by Mitchell's performance. To reflect their appreciation and to honor his service, the Irish Parliament established the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund in December 1998. This fund was patterned after the Rhodes Scholarship, which allows American students to study at Oxford, England. The George Mitchell Scholarship will allow American post-graduate students to study at Irish and Northern Irish Universities. The Irish government endowed the fund with 2 million pounds and the US-Ireland Alliance has pledged to match those funds by raising contributions in the U.S. The Irish also honored Mitchell with an honorary degree of doctor in laws, from 400-year-old Trinity College in Dublin. In an article describing the sentiment and the events, the *Belfast News Letter* headline read, "Peace Maker George A Degree Above the Rest".¹⁴

The November 10, 1998 headline of the *Belfast News Letter* read "American Mitchell is Irish Person of Year". Mitchell had become the first foreigner to ever win this prestigious award from the Irish government. Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern presented Mitchell with the award, whose citation read, in part, for "his great skill and tenacity as broker of the Good Friday Agreement and selfless dedication to the cause of peace in Ireland."¹⁵ The Irish had accepted a foreigner as one of their own sons. Although not selected, Mitchell was nominated along with 138 other candidates for the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize. The fact that the Norwegian government nominated him and the panel considered him for the honor further establishes that his mediation was outstanding and worthy of praise at an international level.

The leaders of the city and University of Cork honored Mitchell by presenting him with the "Freedom of the City" award and giving him the honorary degree of doctorate of laws at the University of Cork, on 30 Nov 1998. John F. Kennedy was a previous recipient of the Freedom of the City award. The headline of the *Irish Times* article read "Cork Showers Honours on Helmsman of Peace".¹⁶

On July 3, 1997, the Northern Irish leaders of Queen's University in Belfast honored Mitchell with an honorary doctorate degree, for "services to the community". Later, Mitchell was offered and accepted the position of Chancellor at Queens University. On October 3, 1998, the Northern Irish again honored Mitchell with the prestigious "Making a Difference Award". Chairperson Dr Mary Peters said "he has undoubtedly made a difference to the lives of everyone in Northern Ireland. It has been a privilege to have someone of his stature take on our problems and work unceasingly to find a solution to them."¹⁷

Mitchell also received many accolades and honors back in the U.S. The American Bar Association Section of Litigation honored him, as a fellow lawyer, with the International Human Rights Award on 24 July 1998. *Irish American Magazine* selected him as Irish American of the Year in 1998 and the Washington National Press Club also presented its annual "Mug of Honor" award to Mitchell.

The most prestigious American award Mitchell received was the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Clinton. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest award a civilian can receive in the U.S. On St Patrick's Day, 19 March 1999, in front of many of the Irish and British leaders with whom he had worked, Mitchell received the award from President Clinton at the White House. In his remarks,

President Clinton said, "I really don't know if this is going to mean anything to George anymore, he's gotten so many honors lately. He can't walk two blocks down any street without someone throwing some sort of trophy at him, Irish American of the year, honorary degree from Dublin's Trinity College. He even got a knighthood from the Queen of England. George Lucas offered to give him the Force, but he said The Force was already with him."¹⁸ Although the remarks were light-hearted, the sense of gratitude and honor was sincere. At the reception following the ceremony, Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said "If St Patrick was a latter-day contemporary, if he had one, he's an American and his name is George." The headline in *The Mirror* read "Peace-Maker Gets His Just Reward"¹⁹

In the end, however, the only award that would be truly fitting for Mitchell would be for the leaders of Northern Ireland to build a peaceful society. On 24 April 1998, an op-ed writer for *The Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole, wrote an excellent article summarizing Mitchell's character and his contribution as chairman and recommends a truly appropriate honor for him. Although lengthy, after reading numerous articles praising Mitchell, I feel this article captures the sentiment of the Irish people and the observers of the negotiations perfectly.

It is a reminder of just how lucky we were to be able to call on George Mitchell's skills and what a debt we owe him. The image of George Mitchell that most people will remember from the last 18 months is that of a calm, courteous, infinitely patient man, coming back again and again to preside over more histrionics, more grandstanding, more violence and ignorance. Clinton appointed him as his special economic adviser on Ireland as long ago as December 1994. A year later, he was landed with the job of getting everyone out of the various corners they had painted themselves into over the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. When he and his colleagues did so with a deft, brilliantly drafted and superbly judged report, it was almost immediately side-tracked by John Major's announcement that there would have to be an election before talks could begin. The IRA gave its response with the murderous bombing of Canary Wharf. Then, after the election, when the talks were finally to begin and George Mitchell was asked to chair them, his willingness to take

the job was greeted, not with gratitude and admiration for his resilience, but with vague insults from the Ulster Unionists. When someone takes all of this with calm dignity and then continues to take it through months of fraught negotiations, we tend to think of them as stiff-upper-lipped, unflappable diplomats. And we often see such people as useful but vaguely contemptible. At the back of our heads is the notion that someone who can remain calm, cool and courteous through such events doesn't really care. He is just a skilled professional doing the job he is paid to do. But George Mitchell isn't a professional diplomat and he wasn't paid. He is a lawyer by trade - a trade that is, at his level, highly lucrative so long as you avoid obvious pitfalls like working long, immensely stressful hours for the fractious people of a little foreign country. George Mitchell got no money for his trouble, and the prospect of his getting any glory were, when he took on the job, pretty slim. The chances were that the only thanks he would get would be abuse. And he's not, as the story of his mock debate with Bill Clinton shows, a merely amiable fellow. He is a tough, formidable operator, a man who could, when he was asked, say the most brutal things to his friend. We may never know what it cost such a man to smile and cajole and sympathize with the often petty, graceless participants in the talks. He is probably too decent to ever want to tell us. Or else his tongue is so badly bitten that he finds it painful to speak. Before the wonder of Good Friday quite wears off, though, we should reflect on the great compliment George Mitchell paid us by putting himself at our service. We should acknowledge, too, that he did it for no reason other than the satisfaction of using his great talents for a patently good cause. In an age when we have become wearily cynical about politicians, anxious to spot their angle, it is good to remember that George Mitchell has no angle. He's not running for office. He's not trying to build up credits for some future campaign. The speed with which he moved into the background as soon as his work was done suggests that he's not even interested in what would have been a well-deserved ego trip. One of the things about being in America, though, is that you get to see that far beyond the Paddywhackery and narrow-mindedness, there is a genuine affection for Ireland. People simply wish the Irish well. The idea of the island becoming peaceful and prosperous pleases people who have, to borrow a phrase, no selfish, strategic or economic interest in the place. George Mitchell has embodied that selfless pleasure in the idea of a better Ireland in the most extraordinary way. I was going to suggest that the Government should find some way to salute him, some gesture like honorary citizenship that would at least make it clear that his generosity is appreciated. But it's pretty obvious that the honour he would most want is that Irish people of every sort should raise their expectations of public service to the very high levels that his example has set.²⁰

Mitchell Returns to Salvage the Good Friday Agreement

After the hoopla and enthusiasm of concluding the Good Friday Agreement died down, the political leaders began to look at how they would implement it. What the two sides found was that their understanding and reading of the agreement did not match up with that of their opponents. The Ulster Unionists, in particular expected that prior to establishing the executive council, the IRA would decommission its

weapons, or at the very least, begin to do so. The dispute over prior decommissioning still refused to go away. In a 17 July 1999 Reuters article, David Luhnnow writes "The Good Friday agreement's wording on the issue was vague enough to get all sides to sign up, but left them later to interpret the accord differently. At the time observers said tiptoeing around the arms issue was the only way to get an agreement, but not dealing with the gun in Irish politics may yet come back to haunt both sides and the man that first brought them together."²¹

The fact that the Good Friday Agreement is vague and open to greatly different interpretations is perhaps, one of the few criticisms Mitchell now faces. The debate will continue over whether an imperfect document is better than no agreement at all. Perhaps the Good Friday Agreement was simply the best they could do at the time and now the parties must continue to muddle along and find a way to implement it. Mitchell has reaped what he sowed, as he is now back in Northern Ireland to help resolve the impasse.

During the final week, leading up to Good Friday 1998, Trimble, Taylor and the rest of the UUP leadership were still stuck on the decommissioning issue. At the time, the IRA had not turned in any weapons, and the agreement did not clearly address prior decommissioning. The UUP leaders did not want to sign the agreement without the assurance that they would not have to serve with Sinn Fein on the new executive council until the IRA turned in their weapons. Trimble turned to Blair for that assurance and Blair wrote him a letter that read:

I understand your problem with paragraph 25 of Strand I is that it requires decisions on those who should be excluded or removed from office in the Northern Ireland Executive to be taken on a cross-community basis. This letter is to inform you that if, during the course of the first six months of the shadow Assembly or the Assembly itself, these provisions have been shown to be ineffective, we will support changes to these provisions to enable them to be made properly effective in preventing such people from holding office. Furthermore, I confirm that in our view the effect of the decommissioning section of the agreement, with decommissioning schemes coming into effect in June, is that the process of decommissioning should begin straight away.²²

This letter did give the necessary assurances to the UUP leadership and they signed the Good Friday Agreement. In some peoples' minds, however, it ran contrary to the wording of the agreement itself, which simply requires decommissioning by all parties by May 2000. This misunderstanding or liberal interpretation has led to the current impasse and failure to implement the agreement. Sinn Fein and the IRA insist that the Protestants are now trying to rewrite the Good Friday Agreement by demanding prior decommissioning. The Sinn Fein leaders, Adams and McGuinness, argue that the Ulster Unionists never intended to share power and are again trying to exclude them from the government. On 17 July 1999, *Irish Times* op-ed writer Mick Maguire writes, "In the meantime, the mood of nationalists in Northern Ireland is hardening. Many moderate nationalists who would never describe themselves as republicans are now openly saying that the unionists never had any intention of sharing power with them. They are starting to believe that David Trimble has successfully manipulated the political process for the past 18 months in order to avoid any real change in Northern Ireland."²³ The Sinn Fein leaders insist that the IRA leaders intend to abide by the May 2000 deadline although they have not yet begun to turn in weapons. The UUP

leadership insists that the agreement was to begin decommissioning immediately and conclude by May 2000. They refuse to form an executive until that happens.

Over a year after they signed the agreement, George Mitchell has been invited back to Northern Ireland, to chair the review of the Good Friday Agreement and get the agreement implemented. On 16 July 1999, Brian Williams wrote in a *Reuters* article, "A British government spokesman said he [Mitchell] is going to lend his experience and bring his insight to bear on the situation. The spokesman also said the review would be "tightly focused" on disarmament and bringing the power-sharing assembly to life...A consummate diplomat, Mitchell won over opponents with a patient, even-handed approach."²⁴

The fact that Mitchell was invited back, once again, to attempt to resolve this impasse speaks to the confidence the various leaders involved have in his abilities. If he had not been a vital player the first time around, they could have easily brought in someone else. They certainly were under no obligation to bring him back. *Irish Times* op-ed writer Mick Maguire, wrote "The one good positive element to have emerged in the upcoming round of meetings is that Senator George Mitchell looks set to become involved again. He will be attending the meeting with Blair and Ahern next week and there are some expectations that George Mitchell may consent to chair any review of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Mitchell's tenacity and patience as a chairman is, many people believe, one of the main reasons that a Good Friday Agreement was reached in the first place."²⁵

On 6 September 1999, in an article titled "Calm Hand on the Helm of Peace Process Review", Rosie Cowan wrote "widely respected as one of the chief architects

of the Good Friday Agreement, George Mitchell is now being seen as its guardian angel, the obvious choice to spearhead new talks to save it...Many are glad to have his calm but determined hand at the helm."²⁶ In a place that has seen so many past attempts to gain peace fail, it seems that Mitchell sparked some hope. Although the Good Friday Agreement is now in trouble, the fact that he got the opposing sides this far was an accomplishment beyond the pessimistic expectations of many people in Northern Ireland. They now cling to the hope that this outsider can continue to do what their own leaders and other prior mediators have not been able to do: make peace.

Based upon the three areas that I have analyzed, I have found that the participants and observers of the negotiations give extensive credit for the success of the Good Friday Agreement to Mitchell. The participants regularly mention his contribution as chairman as an integral component to the success of the negotiations. They repeatedly refer to his patience, resolve, optimism and skill as key to his and their success. The fact that they showered him with truly prestigious honors and accolades after the agreement was signed further attests to that fact. Finally, the fact that they called him back, to popular acclaim in the media, speaks volumes to their trust, hope and confidence in him as a mediator. The British and Irish believe in Mitchell. He just needs them to believe in each other.

Notes

Chapter 3

¹ George Mitchell, *Making Peace*, (Alfred Knopf, 1999) p 47.

² Mitchell, p 69.

³ David Trimble, Interview by National Press Club, *Federal News Service*, 7 Dec 98.

⁴ John Hume, Interviewed by CNN, transcript 98041003V13, 10 April 1998.

⁵ "Northern Ireland Peace Deal", CNN, transcript 98041001V00, 10 April 1998.

⁶ "Mitchell Welcomed on Return to Northern Ireland Peace Process", *Agence France Presse*, 21 July 1999, sec. Int News.

⁷ "Northern Ireland Peace Deal", CNN, transcript 98041001V00, 10 April 1998.

⁸ Gerry Adams, Interview by National Press Club, Federal News Service, 29 May 1998.

⁹ "Northern Ireland Peace Deal", CNN, transcript 98041001V00, 10 April 1998.

¹⁰ "The Man We Should Really Thank for Peace in Ireland", *Daily Mail*, 25 May 1998, p. 8.

¹¹ "Northern Ireland: The American Connection", *The Economist*, 21 March 1998, p. 68.

¹² "Slowest Camel Sets the Pace", *Irish Times*, 18 December 1997, sec. Ed, p. 17.

¹³ "The Visionaries of the Irish Agreement", *The Washington Post*, 15 April 1998, sec. Op-Ed, pg. A19.

¹⁴ "Peacemaker George A Degree Above the Rest", *Belfast News Letter*, 2 May 98, sec. News, p. 7.

¹⁵ "American George is Irish Person of Year", *Belfast News Letter*, 10 Nov 98, sec. News, p. 1.

¹⁶ "Cork Showers Honours on Helmsman of Peace" *Irish Times*, 30 Nov 98, sec. Home News, p. 12.

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- ¹⁷ "Honour for Mitchell," *Belfast News Letter*, 3 Oct 98, sec. News, p. 10.
- ¹⁸ William Clinton, Presidential Medal of Freedom Presentation, 19 March 1999, M2 presswire.
- ¹⁹ "Peace-Maker Gets His Just Reward", *The Mirror*, 19 March 1999, sec. News, p. 2.
- ²⁰ "How We Can Best Repay Our Debt to Mitchell", *The Irish Times*, 24 April 1998, sec. Opinion, p. 14.
- ²¹ "Northern Irish Police Hold Four as Mitchell Returns", *Reuters*, 17 July 99
- ²² Mitchell, p 179.
- ²³ "Some Light at End of Tunnel", *Irish Times*, 17 July 1999.
- ²⁴ "Mitchell Called Back to N.Irish Service", *Reuters*, 16 July 1999.
- ²⁵ "Some Light at End of Tunnel", *Irish Times*, 17 July 1999.
- ²⁶ "Calm Hand at the Helm of Peace Process Review", *Press Association Newsfile*, 6 Sep 1999.

Conclusion

On his first trip to Northern Ireland in 1995 Mitchell toured Belfast first with Protestant community leaders and business people, then later with Catholic. Having previously lived in Berlin, Mitchell was familiar with divided cities, but the first time he saw the "peace line" he was taken aback. The "peace line" is a thirty-foot wall, topped with barbed wire, that divides Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods. Mitchell writes, "the name, presumably, is born of the notion that peace can be achieved by building a wall between two warring communities. Unfortunately, if people are determined enough, they can get around, through, and over a wall, and enough of them did so in Northern Ireland to keep the fires of conflict burning."¹

Because of the depth of the mistrust and hatred, the positions of both sides in the conflict were well entrenched. Many previous mediators had failed to break the logjam of intransigence. It was in this divided society, where Catholics and Protestants live their lives with little or no contact with each other, where rival political leaders refuse to speak directly to each other, and where the bomb is used as often as the ballot to pursue political change that Mitchell began his quest for peace. Mitchell writes, "later, when I became known in Northern Ireland, I was often stopped by strangers, on the street, in the airport, in restaurants. They almost always offered words of gratitude and encouragement: "Thank you, Senator." "God bless you." "We appreciate what you're doing." And then, always, the fear: "But you're wasting your

time. We've been killing each other for centuries and we're doomed to go on killing each other forever."² If there had been no hope at all, the British and Irish wouldn't have held negotiations in the first place, but skepticism and doubt ran deep. Perhaps Mitchell's greatest feat was overcoming all of the intense mistrust, hatred and doubt to craft an agreement. He kindled a flame of hope.

In chapter one I found, using Deutsch's theory of integration, that no security community had arisen in Northern Ireland. The two sides remain as segregated and distrustful today as they were thirty years ago when the troubles began. This led me to the tentative conclusion that the environment for negotiations was no more conducive in 1995 than in the past. The 'image of the enemy' was the same as ever. As a result, I turned to the negotiations, to analyze what Mitchell did to overcome the obstacles of hatred and mistrust.

In chapter two I found, using mediation theory, that Mitchell shrewdly and adroitly used many of the techniques, strategies and tactics recommended by the scholars and students of mediation. This finding refreshingly attested both to the wisdom of the scholars and to the intuitive skills of George Mitchell. In particular, Mitchell was willing to listen patiently to all parties. His fairness and patience won over those who initially questioned his impartiality. He established a starting point and common ground that all parties could agree to with his Mitchell Principles. By insisting that all party leaders publicly swear to uphold the principles, he reduced the likelihood that they would backtrack on their promise at a later date. To minimize the contentiousness and endless speech making that came with face-to-face meetings, Mitchell had the parties meet in separate rooms. Throughout the negotiations, he

made the rounds, meeting with party leaders to offer proposals, encourage cooperation and refine recommendations. The fact that proposals were coming from Mitchell and not the opposition reduced the tension as well as made it easier for the parties to accept less than optimal recommendations. Because Mitchell had strong public support for the peace process, none of the party leaders wanted to be labeled as the person who caused the negotiations to fail. Finally, when the parties were getting bogged down again, Mitchell used the tactic of setting a deadline for the end of the negotiations to get the negotiators to finalize the agreement.

Comparing mediation theory and Mitchell's performance as chairman of the negotiations, I found that Mitchell's actions fell well within the time-tested parameters of successful mediation. Considering the environment in which he was working, Mitchell adapted his techniques, tactics and strategies, resulting in an almost perfect fit.

As I result of my analysis in chapters one and two, I have found that Mitchell was, indeed, an effective mediator; but in order to gain an understanding of the criticality of his personal participation, I analyzed the comments made about Mitchell by other participants and observers of the negotiations. In chapter three, I analyzed the statements made about Mitchell, in the media, by the other political leaders involved in the negotiations. I also noted the abundance of awards and honors bestowed upon Mitchell after the signing of the agreement. Finally, I noted that the British and Irish have invited Mitchell back to help them resolve their current impasse over implementing the Good Friday Agreement. Throughout my research, I found nothing but immense praise and gratitude for Mitchell. Repeatedly, the other leaders

singled him out for praise. He was given truly prestigious honors, to include a knighthood from the Queen of England and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton.

This gracious behavior by the Irish and British was the final piece of the puzzle for me. The results of the three chapters combined indicate to me that Mitchell was much more than a diplomat providing good offices. He was essential to the success of the Good Friday Agreement. Mitchell's contribution to the success of the Good Friday Agreement was necessary, if not sufficient. Perhaps someone else could have accomplished this feat as well, but no one had done so previously and nobody expected Mitchell to do so either.

There were certainly other factors that contributed to the success of the negotiations. The war weariness of the Northern Irish people was of major significance. Public support for the peace process allowed courageous men and women, like Trimble, to remain in the negotiations when other Protestant leaders, like Paisley, were walking out. Public support allowed Trimble to continue to negotiate while Paisley continuously branded him as a "traitor to Unionism" in the press. Finally, public support was the glue that kept the parties negotiating for two long years. Nobody wanted to be responsible for the collapse of the negotiations and the violence that would certainly follow.

Many other leaders showed the same great political courage as Trimble. Prime Minister Major, for example, initiated the negotiations at a time when his party's control of the government was tenuous. Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam stooped to meeting with prisoners, who have great political influence in certain

parties, in order to keep the process alive. When Unionists balked, Irish Taoiseach Ahern agreed to renegotiate portions of the agreement that the British had previously accepted, in order to keep the peace process alive. Each of these acts could have cost individual leaders political and popular support, but all placed the peace process ahead of their own personal interests. The leaders of Northern Ireland were willing to give the process a chance. They only needed someone to guide them through the minefield of their own making.

With all of this said, what, if anything, can be said about the future of mediation and conflict resolution? I have argued that Mitchell's efforts in Northern Ireland were the key to tipping the scales towards peace. Another important contribution is the positive reinforcement his example has given scholars and practitioners of mediation and conflict resolution. His personal abilities and characteristics melded nicely with the hostile situation in the particular environment of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, this does not mean that if everyone mimics Mitchell's style that they will succeed as a mediator. Nor does it mean that if we send Mitchell to mediate every negotiation around the world that we will have peace. Throughout my research of mediation, the various scholars posited that mediators need to adapt their tactics and strategies in accordance with the negotiating environment; and this is the primary lesson we can gain from analyzing Mitchell.

The key to taking advantage of Mitchell's example is to observe the environment in which he worked and note how he adapted his tactics and strategies to it. Additionally, we should note how his character traits and status as a neutral mediator complemented the negotiating environment. We have found that Mitchell's

endurance and patience were appropriate for these particular negotiations. A more forceful approach, using a principal mediator's sticks and carrots, may be in order elsewhere.

As a result of my analysis, I believe that Mitchell's performance reinforces contemporary mediation theory. In particular, I would like to offer three general observations, stemming from the negotiations, that future mediators and scholars of conflict resolution may find useful:

1) The leaders and their constituents must want to negotiate and live peacefully. This may sound trite, but it entails possessing great courage. It requires the ability to remain at the negotiating table when terrorists from the opposition are attempting to derail the process with violence. It also requires leaders to take political actions to advance the peace process that may put them personally at risk in the next election. If this desire is not present, no mediator, Mitchell or any other, will likely succeed. Some scholars call a conflict "ripe" when the two sides are ready to negotiate in good faith. Ripeness can come early or late in the lifecycle of a conflict. The desire of the vast majority of the people to live in peace must be present and the people must support their leaders who are willing to negotiate in good faith.

2) Mediators must be unselfishly dedicated to the goal of attaining a peaceful resolution. This requires great patience, humility and endurance. A mediator must put the process ahead of his own pride and interests and be willing to stick with the process for the long haul. Although he must be humble, he must not be overly weak, lest he lose respect and authority.

3) It is indeed vital to be able to adapt one's tactics and strategies to suit the negotiating environment. Some circumstances demand that the mediator patiently hear all sides of the story, while others call for him to set firm deadlines. Along this same vein, certain types of mediators (neutral or principal) are more likely to be effective in particular circumstances. Those who would invite a mediator to the negotiating table should analyze the current environment and attempt to choose a mediator with the assets, strengths and abilities that best complement the current conditions, but who also has the flexibility to adapt as the negotiations progress. In my analysis I have found that individuals do make a difference in mediation and conflict resolution. Their strengths and weaknesses will affect the negotiations. It may sound simple, but people count. Northern Ireland was fortunate to get the right man for the job.

After the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, Mitchell was preparing to leave Northern Ireland for the U.S. As he left the hotel, on his way to the airport, "suddenly, someone called my name. I turned to see two elderly, gray-haired women walking toward me. One of them grabbed my hands and said, "We want to thank you. Not for us, our lives are nearly over, but for our grandchildren, whose lives are just beginning. Thanks to you they'll lead lives of peace and hope, something we've never known." Then with tears of joy streaming down their faces, they hugged me. Those words will echo in my mind forever. They made it all worthwhile."³

Mitchell writes that his dream is to "return to Northern Ireland in a few years with my son, Andrew. We will roam the countryside, taking in the sights and smells and sounds of one of the most beautiful landscapes on earth. Then, on a rainy

afternoon (there are many in Northern Ireland) we will drive to Stormont and sit quietly in the visitors gallery of the Northern Ireland Assembly. There we will watch and listen as the members of the Assembly debate the ordinary issues of life in a peaceful democratic society: education, health care, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, trade. There will be no talk of war, for the war will have long been over. There will be no talk of peace, for peace will by then be taken for granted. On that day, the day on which peace is taken for granted in Northern Ireland, I will be fulfilled."⁴ Amen.

Notes

Conclusion

¹ George Mitchell, *Making Peace*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p. 11.

² Mitchell, p. 20.

³ Mitchell, p. 183.

⁴ Mitchell, p. 188.

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